IN SANCHO PANZA'S PIT

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IN SANCHO PANZA'S PIT.

BY

MRS. B. SIM CUNNINGHAM.

"Remorse is as the heart in which it grows:
If that be gentle, it drops balmy dews
Of true repentance."

* * * * * * * * *

"Delights so full, if unalloyed with grief,
Were ominous."

* * * * * * * * *

"Just Heaven instructs us with an awful voice
That Conscience rules us, e'en against our choice."

COLERIDGE'S *Remorse.*

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IN SANCHO PANZA'S PIT.

CHAPTER I.

FATHER AND SON.

"The sole succeeder to his wealth and fame,
The last remaining pillar of his house!"

AYLMER'S *Field.*

THEY were alone in the library at Cheswick Hall, the father sitting upright in an easy-chair, the son standing by one of the long, deep-seated windows looking out into the garden. The father portly and disabled by gout,—that inevitable foe to your *bon viveur* all the world over,—the son tall, slender, supple-limbed, a worthy scion of the old race that had counted princes in its line before the timbers had been seasoned for the fleet that bore Columbus to the green shores of that New Western World where the old hall reared its chimneys to-day.

The father, contrary to long-established custom, was ignoring his post-prandial nap. There were heavy lines about his mouth, and a deep, lowering frown above his brows that were naturally stern and severe.

Cedric—so named after a Saxon progenitor, for Robert Cheswick clung to the traditions of his race with a zeal

worthy a better cause—stood erect, his frank face flushing, his eyes blue and open as those of a child, filled with indignation and anger. The wonderful resemblance between the two was markedly traceable at that moment, for anger brings out the strong points of one's physiognomy as no other passion does. In both were the same well-opened blue eyes, the straight, sensitive nose, the finely-curved mouth and square, determined chin; but where the father's eyes were cold and unbelieving, those of the son's were warm and frank, and while the lines of the older face bespoke intolerance and a sort of resentful querulousness, the younger one was fresh and unworn, entirely destitute of lines, unless we except that almost imperceptible curve between the upper lip and the base of the nose, which Victor Hugo assigns peculiarly to feminine organizations, but which, observation teaches us, is quite as often bestowed, with the quality it indicates, upon those of the opposite sex.

Cedric looked out over the garden paths, and as he looked the unquiet fire in his eyes died down, and a dreamy pleasure awoke in them instead. There was the golden warmth of an autumn atmosphere outside the window, and fading rose-leaves were drifted hither and thither by soft, vagrant breezes.

"Rick, will you give me your attention, sir?"

Cedric turned at the sound of his father's voice, raised from its ordinary pitch.

"I want the truth of this disgraceful report."

Cedric hesitated, his hand at his throat as though his collar choked him.

"If I tell you anything, father, it will be the truth, you know!"

The father did not feel disposed to quarrel with the spirit that dictated that answer; instead, the lines of his

face thinned a little, for he felt a certain pride in his boy's pride, inherent as he knew it to be.

"It is true, in part, what Jacob Martin heard at the Valley Farm sale. I did not say I would knock Rabys down if he ever dared speak to me again, but—I fear I shall, father!"

His last words rang with a sharp note of defiance.

"Listen, father!" for he saw the portentous lines gathering afresh beneath those heavy brows: "Rabys Holme is without honor; he enjoys your confidence, he influences you to indulge him, but he is without honor. The smallest stable-boy on the place could tell you that; though God knows I would be the last to say it, only that my conduct needs some justification."

Whether it was that Mr. Cheswick resented the sudden manhood of this dreamy-eyed boy, who until now had never dared question his lightest command, or whether Cedric had unwittingly pierced a joint of his armor of impassability it is impossible to determine, but certain it is that he grew bitterly, unreasonably angry. The lad bore it quietly, that wild, menacing storm of words that he had braved a few times in his life before, for as little apparent reason, looking over the garden-walks, and wondering drearily if many sons had known so little fatherly justice as he; as for love, he had long ago ceased to hope for that from his father.

"And pray, my pseudo-Galahad, my Quixote of the thirty wind-mills, *who* is this Dulcinea whose wrongs you have chosen to redress?"

The blue veins stood out like cords on Cedric's temples, for he had all his father's passionate sense of what was due him.

"I think her wrongs should be as much to you as they are to me, father,—my cousin Amy's!"

The old man's eyes fell for an instant before the keen scorn of his son's glance; but only for a moment; then he rose from his chair and took a step towards him, confronting him with a face purpled by rage.

"Toasted her, eh? and for that you make a fool of yourself, and get your name bandied all over the country. Now, sir, listen to *me!* *You'll* do the apologizing, do you hear? *You*, instead of Rabys Holme!"

"You are surely not in earnest, father?"

But as he spoke all the ruddy, healthful tinting died out of his face.

"Disobey me, sir, and see!"

A silence reigned in the wide, lofty room.

The curtains swayed fitfully in the soft air floating in from the open windows. What a superb old room it was! every nook and cranny filled with books, and above the mantel a quiet golden landscape of Lorraine's charming one, with its beauty and truth. From his childhood Cedric had lived his happiest hours there, dreaming over some Minnesinger ballad in the broad, low window-seat, or searching the musty chronicles on the lower library shelves for the traditions of his ancestors, and later the loveliest hopes had come to him there, the fairest anticipations that had ever visited the heart of youth.

"I cannot do it, father," he said at last, turning from the window towards the easy-chair where Mr. Cheswick sat rubbing his lame foot. "I cannot do it, and you would not respect me if I did. Wait; hear me out, father,—I claim the privilege to judge for myself for the first time to-day. You offered us—Rabys and me—the career we chose. There are reasons why I would prefer life at home, but Rabys has chosen to stay; he has prejudiced you, influenced you, usurped my place in your life, as I doubt not in your heart, since you first brought him

here a little fellow in blouses. I suppose it will be so always, but I do not choose to submit to it any longer. I am not a stone, that I can bear to see a stranger close my own father's heart against me; so I choose my career abroad."

There was an appeal in the wide blue eyes of the lad, from which his father shrank as from the prick of a sharp sword-point. Just such mute, patient pain had looked out from other eyes long years ago,—eyes that had been mere dust for many years, but that lived in his memory, and looked at him every day from the proud fair face of his boy.

"A career abroad!" he echoed, with a short, mocking laugh, crushing the persistent memory, and hardening his heart anew. "I should like to understand how much of a career you expect to achieve, unaided by my money and influence."

It amused him to try the grit of the boy, the while it angered him.

"A Cheswick to the backbone!" he said to himself, with a thrill of pride.

But the demon of imperious will that had warped and wrecked his best impulses through so many years was not to be aroused with impunity. It angered him the while it elated him to find his boy so dauntless.

Unreasonable? Yes; the son who had inherited his father's resolute strength, his physique and pride, owned a right as indubitable to the complement of will and tenacity of purpose that went along with his father's nature. But Mr. Cheswick was too old-fashioned to be analytic. He had read Sterne, it is true, but not Swinburne; and, like the bird-haunted mariner of Coleridge's quaint "Rime," he "had penance done, and penance more would do" on account of this very lack.

The man who is not metaphysical has to suffer a great deal from feeling, and from the dire mistakes he is apt to perpetrate,—mistakes which, like the roc's egg in the fairy tale, are easy to take down, but impossible to replace.

"You will get no help from me," reiterated his father.

"Then I go without it, that's all! A man need not starve in the world because God has given him an unjust father!" And he leaped out of the low window into the garden below.

If Prince, the meek, mild-eyed setter on the lawn outside, whom he had cuffed and petted alternately for the last five years,—if Prince had suddenly rushed in at the window and flown at his throat, Mr. Cheswick could not have experienced more complete surprise than he did. That Cedric should defy him like that—Cedric, who had endured his most ungovernable fits of fury without flinching,—Cedric, who from his very babyhood had never failed to yield him the most unquestioning obedience!

He lifted his lame foot to a higher cushion with a groan.

"The absurd young rascal!" he muttered. "Well, let him go! He'll get sick of his career abroad soon enough, and come back willing to eat as much humble-pie as I choose to set before him. Gad! but the boy stuck to his ground! Ah, well, my fine fellow, it won't hurt you to try your wings a little; you can go!"

CHAPTER II.

AMY.

"If there be
A devil in man there is an angel too."
Sea Dreams.

WHEN Cedric landed in the tulip-bed beneath the library window, he was greeted by a ringing peal of laughter. A young girl in a wide garden-hat ran down the broad stone steps of the portico to meet him. A sheet of music fluttered in one hand, the other she linked in his arm with the freedom of a familiar companion. This was Amy Randolph, his father's great-niece and ward, a very young girl, with the dreamy fancies of a child shining as yet in her soft brown eyes. Wonderful eyes they were, with above them the *even* brows that Spenser loved, and the white, smooth forehead, gently arched at the top, was shadowed by masses of gold-glinted brown hair that bore the ruddy gloss of the chestnut in its abundant waves. The nose was of the Grecian type, which means nothing, it is true, but is the nearest approach to perfection among noses. The lips were fresh and rosy, pensive when in repose, but more often wearing the smiling curves of a sunny nature, and the chin, slightly pointed and velvety as an infant's, bespoke a nature not easily satisfied with the types of humanity one meets in every-day life.

Lavater would have delighted in the harmony of Amy Randolph's features and their strict dependence upon each other in their maintenance of the perfect character

indicated thereby, but to the many, ignorant or careless of physiognomic combinations, Mr. Cheswick's niece was only a very gentle, sweet-faced young girl, possessing a graceful figure and remarkably delicate features.

Even Cedric, given to analyzing impulse itself, with his cool, wide gray-blue eyes, was wont to accept the sense of completeness he had ever derived from Amy's nearness as the natural concomitant of his love for her, or, perhaps, the reflex of that peculiar sympathy which had existed from the first between the two. I think it makes our best enjoyment always when we feel the beauty of an object before that object has been named beautiful by our physical discernment. It is an old but a very true maxim that man fails to appreciate present blessings, but it is untrue in an equal degree that lack of appreciation detracts from his enjoyment thereof. As well say a man does not enjoy the freedom of health because he fails to value it rightly. Cedric was to learn later just how much inspiration and happiness he had drawn from Amy's essentially harmonious nature, as the invalid looks back with amaze upon the unacknowledged blessings of strength and health that had once been his own.

"Truant!" she cried, "I have been waiting for you a half-hour, and the shadows in our Academia growing longer and darker. I don't think you will find fault with my slovenly execution this evening, it bears the test of the organ," waving the printed score before his eyes. They were on the portico now; beneath them stretched the wide expanse of the pleasure-grounds, brilliant with a parti-colored display of geraniums, dahlias, and late-blooming roses. The house was built of gray stone, a rambling pile that was at once large, cheerful, and convenient. A broad drive swept past the portico, bordering a circular parterre, which had been the delight of Cedric's

heart from his boyhood. Within it grew great forest-trees, old-fashioned smoke-bushes, deutzias, and honeysuckles trained to conical lattices that shot past the Cheswick chimneys. Fronting the portico, beyond the parterre and drive, stretched an ample sodded plateau which Cedric had converted into a croquet-ground since his return from college. There were numberless rustic seats dotted about it here and there, a wide gravel path bordered it on three sides, and the deepest green shade reigned there throughout all the heat of summer. Midway the grounds, stood a mulberry-tree of luxuriant growth, with a bamboo lounge leaning against its lusty trunk. A large stone vase of curious form, filled with shade-loving begonias and fuschias, bloomed like a gorgeous bouquet among the cool, green shadows, and in convenient proximity to the bamboo lounge stood a small round table of scroll-work, painted green. It looked like a fairy's boudoir, and Cedric, shading his eyes with his hand, let his gaze linger longest there, while he strove in vain to swallow the hard knot swelling in his throat.

Suddenly Amy caught sight of his face, white and stern, with a smothered flame in the eyes.

"Oh, Cedric!" she asked, in a half frightened undertone, "what has happened?"

He turned, but avoided her gaze.

"Where is Aunt Bab?" His voice sounded strange to himself.

"Aunt Bab is in the basement," she answered, regarding him with eyes grown wide and questioning.

"Then come to the parlor with me, Amy; I have something to say to you." She followed him across the hall, flecked with slanting beams of sunset light, and into the long, old-fashioned apartment known as "the parlor."

He threw himself into the first chair, a choking in his

throat that nearly ended in a sob. The privileges of his manhood were all forgotten now, poor lad!

Amy flung her garden-hat upon a chair, and went over to him. "Oh, Cedric, my dear!" she cried, taking his hand between both her own, "you are ill, I know, your hands are so cold!"

His hand closed on hers convulsively. "I am going away from Cheswick, after all, Amy; I have reconsidered my decision." Around the fresh rosy lips ran a white circling line, and the soft, peach-like bloom drifted entirely out of her cheeks.

"But something is driving you away, Cedric, and I should like you to go of your own will," she said, with abortive attempts to keep the tears out of her voice.

He shook his head: he did not intend that she should know. There was a long silence between them.

"What does it matter that nothing is gained by your confiding your trouble to me, so that nothing is lost?" she asked at length, regarding the resolute sternness of his face with something like dismay.

He looked up in surprise that she should have so divined his thoughts. But he should not have been surprised: it was not the first time that Amy, with those dark-veiled eyes, had revealed unto him his thoughts before he had well put them into shape himself. "As to that, Amy, my confidence would ill repay you for what you would have to lose in temper and comfort. There is scarcely anything to tell. My father is angry with me, unjustly, not for the first time, as you well know. But his anger will not endure, for he is sure to find out the truth. Justice isn't half so blind as she is painted," with an attempt at his old light manner. "I will get my rights some day. But I cannot comply with father's conditions and stay at Cheswick, so I am going to try my luck in the world."

"But where will you go?" she asked; "has your father settled you in any position?" He laughed a little mockingly.

"You don't seem to understand that I go under the ban of his displeasure, and will have my own way to make. But I shall know always where to find *you!*"

He drew her to him, laying his cheek against the soft braids of her hair, with an odd compound of pain and joy in his heart. They had grown very dear to each other, very close familiar friends, in this year they had spent together at Cheswick, but never before had Cedric held her thus, and never, oh, never before had her whole being thrilled with such sweet pain. Ah, they are fleet racers through these lives of ours! "Pain is slow and pleasure fleet," sings the poet, but they run not unfrequently on parallel tracks. They were in the old-fashioned parlor. An organ and a piano stood in opposite corners. On the organ-rack Bach's Well-Tempered Harpsichord stood open; but it was not from that Cedric drew such heavenly strains when, the bitterness of that first moment with Amy over, he went to fortify his spirit with a draught from those pure fountains of immortal youth and freshness that flow through the boundless realm of music. The tender, throbbing *vox humana* of the organ spoke to the human heart of the girl as she knelt in a bitter agony of unrest by the chair he had vacated.

"Be still," said the tender "human voice" of the organ, as the flexile fingers strayed from one theme to another, interpreting naught but soothing, hopeful messages; "be still, foolish human heart, so tender yet so selfish. Let your love, your faith, your prayers, aye, even your tears, follow him whither he goes on his unknown way; but give him your smiles now, your comforting, hopeful words. See!"—and the *vox humana* wailed, a very spirit

of flesh behind the gilded pipes—"his heart aches not one whit less than yours that his eyes are so dry!"

She went over to his side, unselfish Amy; her eyes were wet, it is true, but the smiles were making rainbows of the tears. "A robin singing with wet wings" indeed; but what matter? There was the robin's song to cheer you, fearless, sweet, and true, amid all the rush and whirl of pelting shower and swirling bush.

"That sounds like an answered prayer, Cedric, my dear," she said, in her quaint, serious way, with her hand on his shoulder; "and I know *now*, I feel that you will come back very soon."

Was it in human heart not to experience some sort of courage from such hopeful smile and word?

Cedric went out with her into the grounds, tossing the sunny hair from his brow with the old careless gesture. It would all come right; he was young, he was strong, and who knew but his father might relent, and he need not leave Amy and Cheswick after all!

CHAPTER III.

AT BAY.

"What is it that has been done?
O dawn of Eden, bright over earth and sky,
The fires of Hell broke out of thy rising sun,
The fires of Hell and Hate."—*Maud.*

In the basement Aunt Bab was ordering supper,—a middle-aged maiden lady, with corkscrew curls on either side her temples, and very keen black eyes peering at you over gold-rimmed spectacles. Aunt Bab was factotum at Cheswick, and there was nothing else she enjoyed so much. She was wont to say, "We need beggars at Cheswick to make it just what it ought to be," whereupon Rick teasingly declared that Aunt Bab's generosity, upon analysis, resolved into the mere instinct of saving, since beggars were only wanted at Cheswick to clear away the crusts that the dogs could not manage. But Rick was much too good-hearted a fellow to have said it had he really thought it, and, indeed, there was a tradition in the household to the effect that years ago Aunt Bab had caught a delinquent housemaid in the act of stealing, and that when she discharged her upon the score of her dishonesty she not only allowed her to carry her booty away with her, but made her a present of a very gay calico dress in the bargain. Aunt Bab was—without knowing it, to her credit be it said—a disciple of Rauch, who says, "The thing is not whether a deed is honorable in itself, but whether it agrees with our own notions of honor."

In the basement Aunt Bab was ordering supper,—

"A good mould of smearkase, 'Manda, for Rick, you know, and some fresh Maryland biscuit,—not too much lard, mind; and there's a leaf-sausage boiled that'll do sliced. Did you scald the crocks, as I told you, 'Manda? and are the cows coming up in the milk since they were turned out in that new pasture?"——

"Aunt Bab!—ho, auntie!"

"It's Rick; step to the door, 'Manda, and see what he wants. His clothes gathered up, and a lot of the new socks I've been knitting? Why, what in the land's up? Just tell him I am coming, will you?"

In the upper hall Rick stood at the top of the steps awaiting her.

"Where are you going, Rick, so suddenly?" she asked, panting a little for breath, for the basement stairs were rather steep, and stooping to brush the lint off her cashmere skirt.

"I scarcely know myself, auntie; but it isn't sudden. I've been revolving the matter in my mind for a week."

She could not see his face plainly, down here at the remote end of the long hall, but something in his voice struck her as strange. She settled her spectacles carefully and peered at him, *through* them this time.

"That's odd, Rick!" she said.

"Yes, it is odd, auntie; and the oddest part of it is, I am not coming back." Then he told her the whole story, prefaced by a request that she would keep the cause of his going a secret from Amy. "She would only distress herself unnecessarily about it," he added.

Miss Barbara Cheswick inherited also the quick temper of her race. She left Cedric standing at the top of the basement stairs and burst in upon her brother, sitting portly and comfortable at his library-table, like a withered

and indignant pythoness. A stormy scene ensued,—it was not the first time Miss Barbara had spoken her mind out freely to her brother,—but the result was *nil.* The father, inflamed to renewed anger by what he chose to term the obstinacy of his son, refused to yield one jot or tittle of his authority.

Poor Miss Bab! She forgot the cream for the smearkase; she forgot the biscuits that awaited her careful inspection. And, oh! *how* she wept, poor old soul, as she hastily disemboweled closets and drawers of Cedric's possessions and packed them in the great trunk he had used at college! And how many prayers she folded away with the pantaloons, the waistcoats, and coats! Ah, Cedric, with gentle Amy's love and Aunt Bab's motherly affection following you out across the unknown fields whither you go, surely you are sheltered as though by an ægis thrown round you!

He did not wait until dark to leave. The station was a full mile away, and the last passenger-train passed at eight o'clock. He stopped at the stables to bid good-by to Duffer, the horse he called his own, a bright chestnut bay, that gave a low whinny of delight when he heard the familiar voice.

Poor fellow! you will not blame him when I tell you that in the dark stable-stall he leaned his head against his horse's mane and let the tears drop, one after another, down the glossy arched neck. So many glad, free days they had spent together, rushing like the wind along the leafy lanes and breezy hills of his ancestral acres; so many wild gallops they had taken among the dark, green solitudes of the pine cliffs, unearthing Reynard and chasing him tirelessly to cover!

The sun was down when he left the stables and went through the yard to the road that led winding down to-

ward the cliffs and the creek. At the gate marking the terminus of the drive stood Amy, and the fitful red light of the sunset contrasted sharply with the pallor of her cheeks.

He stopped in front of her, looking up toward the parterre that had been his pride since when in pinafores he had dug up the bulbs and mutilated the rose-trees, and proven himself even then a very determined young scion of the old stock, from which he was thrust out now for no reason but that a stranger had won the heart of his father from him.

It was a bitter thought, for pride of race was strong in Cedric's breast, and he had always loved to think that, tyrannical and imperious though his father might be, there was still that inherited chivalry in his veins which had ever been the boast of the Cheswicks. There were chronicles treasured upon the library shelves that gave to a Robert of Cheswick in the olden days the title of Robert the Just, because he had chosen to redress his sovereign's wrong by sword and lusty blows, and later, when travelling merchantmen were waylaid, crossing the river that ran by their demesne, and throttled in the cold, dark waves for the sake of their booty, a Cheswick had built the bridge over the dangerous ford, though he died for the deed by the sword of his people.

Had the brave old blood run out in these late centuries, or turned thin and watery, mere craven blood after all? You will see what a passionate, foolish young aristocrat he was, and how unfit for the age he lived in. Well, he was to learn how purposeless had been his dreams and his theories in the world whither he was going,—in the world that asks not if you have proud blood in your veins, but—if you have position; that asks not if you are chivalrous, but—if you are capable! What recks it

to the world that in Henry the Second's reign a Cheswick earned a chivalrous pseudonym by brave deeds, if the Cheswick of to-day possesses not the wherewithal to invite the world to dinner?

"Have you much money, Cedric?" asked Amy, in a hesitant voice.

"Enough for a while, Amy; don't trouble about that part of it, I shall get along."

"But—but—if you would but take this, Cedric," pushing a morocco pocket-book through into his hand where it rested on the gate. "Ah, do not look so angry, Cedric; you might let me lend it to you, at least."

"I am not angry, Amy; how could you think so? but I do not need your money. Keep it, darling, and, if I do not come back for years, buy Duffer a tombstone with it, should he die in the mean time. Come, sweetheart, cheer up," for the tears were falling down her cheeks, "I shall be back before Duffer has time to forget me; my father will find out the truth, and when he does, ah, I shall not be too proud to come back to Cheswick. I will write to you every week, and you will answer punctually, I know. Don't you see, it is only a little trip I am taking, after all. Good-by, pet, keep up the 'appassionata,' and, whatever you do, don't grieve after me. This is only one of father's caprices, which will not separate us long. Good-by!"

He kissed her over the gate, then vaulted into the meadow, intending to take the "cross-cut" into the woods that was the nearest route to the station, and as he leaped the second fence he turned and waved his hand to her gayly.

An unselfish action brings with it its own reward. Cedric had felt miserable enough when he left Duffer in the stable and walked out towards the highway, with

the spacious grounds of his loved old birthplace looking never so fair and tempting as it did to him then, its lineal inheritor. A hot anger was fomenting steadily in his brain towards his father, unjust and tyrannical as never was father before him; but at the first glimpse of Amy, with her pale, patient face and sorrowful eyes, love usurped the place of hate in his heart, and pity for her loneliness impelled him to "wear a brave face in the front of things." And in doing so he had not only comforted her but had lightened the burden for himself. What more natural to suppose than that his innocence would vindicate itself? The chivalric faith of the dead and gone Cheswicks blossomed anew in his being,—the faith that had trusted, vainly too often, to the sympathy of Man and the blind dominion of Chance.

A piece of woodland lay between the meadow-lands of Cheswick and the county road, and into it Cedric plunged, baring his head to its grateful shadows. From a clearing in its midst was to be gained an unintercepted view of the old gray stone house and its spacious grounds; from thence the road declined, making a grade of at least twenty feet by the time the creek and the mill were reached, and along the turnpike for miles the traveller caught occasional glimpses of the noble old pile standing out like a *bas-relief* from its background of shadowy blue mountains, or shining through the night like a beacon above the dark pine cliffs. Cedric did not stop in the clearing for a parting glance at Cheswick; he chose rather to bear away with him his last memory of it with Amy, white and patient, smiling a farewell to him over the gate, striving for his sake, just as he had for hers, to be hopeful and brave. He walked onward rapidly, his valise slung across his shoulders. The September evening was warm, and he wiped his forehead more than once.

The dead leaves rustled beneath his feet, off in the shades of the wood an owl was hooting, and an axe was ringing merrily among the green glades. Old Jacob Martin, his father's faithful servitor, was at work beyond the clearing. He noted the different sounds unconsciously, never dreaming how the after-years were to be haunted ever by the sound of rustling leaves, the dismal cry of an owl, the metallic ring of a woodman's axe!

"*Have you my sweetheart seen?*" rang out a manly voice in the distance, a voice clear as a bell and resonant as an organ-tone.

Cedric Cheswick uttered a low cry and stood still. Ah! is it true, I wonder, that two angels walk with us always, the black and the white, between whom are continual wrestlings and warfare? If so, then I think the poor white angel must often grow weary of a conflict in which he so rarely finds himself a match for his foe.

"*Have you my sweetheart seen?*" The rich, rolling tones were as so many devils' jeers to the pale youth standing alone in the woodland path, with his back to his home and his heritage. Had the chivalric blood grown craven? the proud brave blood that had won for that Cheswick in mediæval ages the title of The Just!

He moved slowly, as though impelled by invisible hands, down the bridle-path in the direction of the voice.

"*Have you my sweetheart seen?*" Nearer, nearer, chanting joyously, fearlessly! In a moment more a young man bounded into sight, flinging his cap in the air and catching it, like a boy let loose from school.

"Hey, Rick!" he cried, coming to a stand-still a few feet in front of him. "Out on another scout? Well," with a laugh indescribably mocking, "it is good to know that Achilles is vulnerable, if only in his heel!"

But Cedric stopped his mouth with a blow that sent

him reeling backward, and as he fell he struck his temple sharply against the jagged, projecting root of a tree.

Look at him as he lies there: the wide, white brow, the full eyes and long lashes, the lips curved into lines of sweetness and candor, you would say. Physiognomy forsooth! we all know that Macklin had the face of a fiend and the soul of a saint.

Cedric stooped to where he lay pallid as marble and nearly as pulseless. A great horror stole upon him; what if he were dead! He hated him, it is true, but he would not murder even the man he hated. How still he was, and it was getting dark here in the depths of the woodland.

"Rabys! Rabys Holme!" Cedric shook his arm and shouted his name in his ear, but the prostrate figure did not stir, and the blood trickled in a thin stream from his wounded temple. He endeavored vainly to stanch it with his handkerchief; he lifted the right hand from its convulsive clutch among the dead leaves; it was cold as ice and pulseless. He let it drop as the horrible truth dawned upon his brain. Rabys Holme had worked his worst upon him,—he had made him a *murderer!*

It was a curious evidence of how soon a sense of guilt can make a coward of the bravest when a step behind him struck such terror to his brain that he started to his feet and made a vain attempt to fly. But the hand of Jacob Martin was upon his shoulder, and Jacob Martin's eyes were questioning his own with a scrutiny and penetration that opened them at once to the very worst facts of the case.

"My God! Mr. Rick, have you killed him?" and he dropped on his knees by the motionless figure with a groan.

"God knows, Jacob! He maddened me with his in-

solent taunts, and I struck him a blow—a single blow! Have I killed him, Jacob? I hated him, but I never meant to kill him!"

There was a silence that seemed to Cedric like the silence of the grave while Jacob Martin peered between the closed lids of those great dark eyes and felt among the linen over his heart for some faint pulse-beat to dispel the horrible doubt that assailed him, but in vain! There was no hope in his face when he lifted it blanched and gray to meet the haggard eyes of his employer's son.

"God forgive you, Mr. Rick,—he is dead!" Cedric threw up his arms with a great cry, and at that old Jacob Martin clambered to his feet and drew the lad into the deeper shades of the wood with the most reckless haste.

"Get away with you, boy, get away. No, I can't stop to listen; some one will come along presently, and then you'll be *lost*. You didn't mean it, I know, but what'll that stand for in law? you've killed him. I know you didn't mean it. You don't need to tell *me*. Go, my boy, go, or it'll be too late!"

Cedric lifted his haggard eyes to his old friend's face. "Go! where shall I go? to the village, Jacob, and give myself up? What need to fly? murder will out, the very stones will cry out that I have killed him. Jacob, I will not go!"

Then the old man broke down and blubbered aloud like a boy who has been whipped. "And you will stay here to be *hung*, when you never meant to harm him, and he has been your only enemy since you left school! There ain't a boy in the stables but has heard you have your tiffs; even if you hadn't *done* it there'd be evidence enough to *hang* you, and yet you're innocent as a babe. Oh, my boy, for justice's sake, for your family's, for *Miss Amy's* sake, go!"

Ah! Jacob Martin had touched the right cord. He leaned on the old man's shoulder and trembled in all his supple, sinewy frame, for to fly looked to him like dishonor, and to stay was surely death; and "what will not a man do for his life?"

"Jacob, will you tell *her* the truth—*all?* I never meant to harm him. Oh, God! I would not kill a fly!"

"Yes, yes, my boy, I will tell her *all;* go quick, God bless you! Oh, my boy, my boy, that I've taught to ride and row and hunt, that ever you'd 'a come to this! God keep you! *I'll* stand your friend; no one shall know but *her,*" in a low, impressive whisper.

Out from the green glades into which he had so lately gone with at least no shadow of guilt on his soul, he fled a murderer now. Oh, pity him all ye who have passionate blood in your veins, for henceforth his crime will darken the brightest skies for him, will taint the richest perfumes, will embitter the sweetest draught, will stain his hands, his life, his soul: "Cursed shall he be in the house, and cursed shall he be in the field."

CHAPTER IV.

THE WHITE ANGEL.

"Drink to Fortune, drink to Chance,
While we keep a little breath;
Drink to heavy Ignorance,
Hob and nob with brother Death!"
The Vision of Sin.

CEDRIC, after two days' travel by rail, found himself at a small village station, entirely ignorant of his whereabouts, and physically so reduced by mental suffering that it was with difficulty he could drag his stumbling feet into the clerk's office and make an intelligible inquiry of the man seated in the operator's chair.

The fellow looked at him with a dubious expression that set Cedric, in dread of detection at all moments, upon the alert at once.

"Don't know where you are, sir? That's odd! Hadn't you better have studied your geography a little before you set out?"

The swift blood of the Cheswicks fired his face at that.

"If it is any trouble to set me straight, sir, I absolve you from it immediately," he said, with a haughty movement of his head, and, suiting the action to the word, he turned on his heel and went out into the glowing light of the September day. It was a desolate place in its aspect,—all country stations are that, but this was exceptionally so. Cedric stood on the long, narrow platform, looking up and down the rails, with his head burning, his limbs trem-

bling, and in his heart a deadly, sick loathing of himself and life that to his healthy, strong nature was bitter as crime itself. Behind him stood the long, low depot building, painted red-brown, with its smell of plaster and guano; opposite a white house, encircled by dilapidated palings, stared at him with its shutterless windows. In the yard, half filled with old shingles,—the roof shone obtrusively with a patch of new ones,—two dirty children pumped alternately into a battered tin bucket, and laughed in boisterous mirth when the water, plashing on the outside, spattered their bare feet, standing sorely in need of some friendly ablutions. No shrubbery, no trees except a few stunted pines, and he looked in vain for the relief of woodland verdure beyond the hills, whither the train had just rushed madly out of sight.

Into the first road Cedric turned, not knowing, scarcely caring, whither it would lead him. He had not tasted food since he left Cheswick. His one thought had been to hurry away as fast as steam could carry him from that bosky dingle near his old home where he had yielded to the temptation of Cain and shed his brother's blood. And as he stumbled along the unfamiliar road he heard, as he had heard every moment since the glad, gay voice dropped into silence, the words of the sweet German love-song as Rabys Holme had chanted it, never dreaming what it was to cost him,—

"Have you my sweetheart seen?"

Ah, why had he taken that backward path that had led him face to face with his foe! It would have been so easy to have gone on, to have passed by that rich, mocking voice, and left it to sing in the nest from which it had ousted him! So easy, with all that hate and love and longing running riot in his breast? So easy to have passed him

by—he, the heir—on his way out from the home of his forefathers, from the presence of the purest love of his life? So easy to make way for this laughing Judas, this handsome scoundrel, his bitterest foe, who in his last hour had worked him ruin irretrievable?

"Oh, my God! did I mean to kill him?" he cried to the solitude around him, for by reason of trouble and long fasting his brain was growing bewildered. Then he covered his face in terror, for a hundred voices seemed repeating it in his ears, and his cry of anguish reverberated in thunder tones about him. Can you see how he was suffering, what torture he was undergoing, from a gentleman of honor and ease suddenly to have become a fugitive, subject by his own act to the extreme penalty of the law?

On the Sabbath before he left home he had attended divine service in the village with Amy. The discourse had treated of the majesty and justice of God's law as represented by the great White Throne of the Revelator's heaven, and the infinite mercy that modifies that law, as symbolized by the pale-green rainbow that encircled the throne. Was it only a week ago that he had walked, with Amy's light hand upon his arm, through the dear familiar ways and talked of God's mercy, and believed in it as a steady, bright reality? Only a week ago! and already the pale-green rainbow had faded in the light that dazzled, blinded him, the light of the great white throne, from whence God meted out the justice of his law to murderers.

The garish sun faded suddenly, the dust in the road arose and choked him, the very stones at his feet cried out as he sought to hide among them, "Man, where is thy brother?"

* * * * * * * * *

After interminable wanderings in all lands, beside all waters, through all space,—himself a phantom, pursued by phantoms,—Cedric Cheswick found himself one day lying in a quiet chamber, lit only by the fire in the grate and a transom open above the door. Where was he? *What* was he? He tried to think, groping feebly with weak fingers among the white folds of what seemed to him his grave-clothes, so chill and spotless were they. He turned his eyes hither and thither about the room: a chair by a closely-curtained window, in the chair a book; a little table near the grate, some bottles thereon, a glass, a flask. The flame in the grate shot up with a momentary radiance; among the snowy vestments about him a crimson ray flickered. He stretched his hand out in an uncertain way to where the red flame danced. Oh, horrors! his fingers were bathed in blood, warm red blood! The fire died down, the chair and table and curtained windows were suddenly blotted out,—and he knelt in Cheswick forest, with Rabys Holme's dead face gleaming chill and white among the dank leaves at his feet. "It is blood!" he shouted, and the Naha-like echo took up the cry, until he laughed, as devils laugh, to find the echo so faithful:

"It is blood!" "It is blood!" "It is blood!"

* * * * * * * * *

"I am sure he has not moved, Herbert. I left the room for a moment, it is true; but he cannot have moved, for see—poor fellow!—his very hands lie just as I left them."

It was a woman's voice that spoke. Cedric, hearing it, opened his eyes, and surprised her with her face bent close to his own.

"Are you the white angel?" he asked. And the sound of his own voice shocked his ear, coming, as it seemed,

from such an incalculable distance. "Are you the white angel?" Then he moved his head uneasily, and a faint color stole into the pallor of his face, for he saw the surprise in the woman's eyes, and he fancied, poor fellow! that he was not acting with just the amount of dignity, perhaps, that the occasion required.

"There, my dear, you are mistaken. Now get some wine-whey, will you? and leave the poor boy with me for a little." Then there was a sound of softly-trailing skirts, and of a door opened and closed.

"In all my travels," volunteered Cedric, making a stupendous effort to say something commonplace and polite to the elderly gentleman who presented himself at this juncture, "in all my travels I never heard a door open or close. Has she gone?"

"Has who gone, my boy?" asked the gentleman, taking his hand in what seemed to Cedric a very cordial grasp for a stranger.

"The white angel?—no, I mean the lady."

"Ah, that's better; yes, she's gone, but she's coming back. Now are you right comfortable?"

Cedric turned a questioning glance upon the kindly, grave face. "Well, yes, except if you would—be—so kind——" then he paused from sheer exhaustion.

"I should like to take off—my shroud, sir! I mean"—with a dim discernment of inaptness in his mode of expression, engendered, doubtless, by the amusement evident in the stranger's face—"I would like to—put on my pants, if you please, sir."

Cedric felt aggrieved at the unequivocal mirth with which the gentleman received this announcement. "There's no hurry, my boy, no hurry; just you lie quiet a while; your 'white angel' will be in with an appetizer directly——"

"The *lady*, sir!" interrupted Cedric, with a sigh of irritation and weakness. "I am aware—I made a mistake—I thought——"

"Ah, well, no matter what you thought, lie still now; look around you and tell me if you have ever been here before."

Cedric obeyed with an effort; the vigorous will that had once said to the brain "do this," and it was done, was a master shorn of authority to-day. It took him a long time to take in his surroundings, but he recognized them at last: a chair with a book in it, a closely-curtained window, a table standing near the grate with a glass and a flask thereon, and a small army of medicine-bottles. Long, long ago he had been here, in some half-forgotten time when he lived in the body, but under what circumstances he could not even dimly remember.

"Well, have you ever been here before?" questioned the gentleman, with his fingers on his wrist.

"Once, perhaps, a hundred years ago, or in a dream," panted Cedric, burning with impatience to understand his position, and beginning to regard his elderly friend in the unflattering light of an inquisitor.

"A hundred years ago! my dear boy, Ninon de l'Enclos didn't divulge her secret to you, no matter how she made it serve herself, that is very evident. You saw this room for the first time just five minutes ago. Come, now, don't fret, you'll understand it little by little. Ah, here comes your 'white angel' with the whey, and now for 'a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together!"

But Cedric ignored the whey impatiently. "I want to know——"

"Not now, not just now, my boy; you have been very ill, and if you want to get well you must be quiet, and submit to my directions in all things. Edith!"

Cedric heard the trailing skirts swish softly over the carpet and pause at his bedside. He had closed his eyes to hide the tears of anger and weakness that the inquisitor's denial had brought there, but at the sound of that low, bell-like voice so close to his ear he opened them again.

"Will you not drink this to please me? I made it with my own hands, and I should feel so disappointed if you refused."

The sweet, motherly face, with its tender eyes, wrought like a charm upon his weakened senses. He smiled up into her eyes, poor boy, a faint, patient smile, and drank the potion at a single draught; and still wondering vaguely at the kind face bent above him, he fell into the first conscious sleep he had known for many days.

* * * * * * * * *

When Cedric had fallen by the wayside, imagining in his keen remorse that he was forsaken alike by God and man, he had in reality fainted from sheer physical exhaustion. Dr. Sinclair, returning late in the day from his professional round, found him lying but a few yards from his gate, flushed and delirious, and with the keen eye of his profession knew him instantly for what he was, —a very ill man.

For many days Cedric lay unconscious beneath the doctor's sheltering roof, attended by the doctor's sister, the "white angel" of his fever dreams.

In the village, upon the outskirts of which Dr. Sinclair's stuccoed villa reared its pretentious gables, comment and curiosity were rife concerning the stranger who lay sick unto death at the doctor's. The clerk at Willams Switch had added his quota of information concerning the fugitive's appearance and his strange ignorance of his whereabouts when he left the train at Willams, and that

was enough of itself to set the village "on its ears" for more. He had been seen once since his convalescence walking in the garden with the doctor's little daughter, and was reported to be a tall, very thin young man, with yellowish curly hair and eyes that were both tired and proud-looking, and there all knowledge of him ended. Speculation took up the theme, enlarged upon it, and made it the one absorbing topic of the day. Willams, like Tennyson's "Village," though it looked so quiet and small, bubbled o'er like a city with gossip and scandal and spite.

"Oh," cried old Mrs. Pry, across the back-yard fence to her neighbor, Miss Mundane, who was shelling Lima beans on her kitchen stoop, "I read of an *awful* embezzlement last night; did you see it? A tall, yellowish-haired young man beat in a cellar-door somewhere down in the country, and cudgelled the life out of a poor old woman, then run off with her steel-framed spectacles, and the Lord knows what all!"

"Sakes alive!" cried Miss Mundane, letting the beans fall out of the basin in her consternation. "What *is* the world a comin' to?"

"Ain't it?" shrieked Mrs. Pry, tying her apron-strings tighter, and complacently taking out a side-comb to give her salt-and-pepper tresses an extra dressing. "And what I started to say was that, who knows but it mightn't be that chap at the doctor's. The description suits him to a p'int; and beatin' in of cellar-doors, runnin' off with spectacles. It don't look so onlikely, do it?"

Down went the beans in Miss Mundane's lively collapse of horror. It was not long until that worthy philanthopist, arrayed in her best gown and bonnet, set out on a tour of the village in order to convey the startling intelligence to her neighbors. And so the ball rolled along,

gaining in proportions as it went, until it stopped at the doctor's gate, and Cedric stumbled out upon it.

In the mean time "the sick fellow," unconscious of the dire dismay his vicinity was creating among the mystery-loving denizens of Willams, felt his strength come back to him slowly, so slowly, indeed, that he wondered if ever again he would be able to move without feeling the weary weight of his limbs dragging him down like an incubus. And yet in these seasons of weakness and pain he enjoyed the nearest approach to peace that his life was to know for many days. He had lost none of the horror of his crime, but he sought in his mind a means for atonement in some sort. He made an effort to straighten out the tangled snarl for future use. The threads were broken, it was not to be wound in straight, smooth skeins, that life of his, whereof he had prospected such glorious possibilities; but it might serve, in spite of rough knots and frayed ends, to piece out some scheme of future usefulness, and so with the hopefulness inherent in his brave nature he sought to look his future in the face.

And the brave mood buoyed him until one day when the doctor's sister,—the white angel whose features bore an intangible, shadowy resemblance to some other face he had known, though it was in vain he strove to catch and fix it,—the doctor's sister questioned him delicately concerning himself, and he knew he dared not even divulge his name.

Then Hope eluded him. With a mocking laugh she turned her back upon him, the fugitive, the murderer, whose only safety lay in concealment.

"I can tell you nothing," he answered, while all the light and youth died out of his face. "It is all summed up in this, dear lady: 'I have sinned, and I have suffered!'"

"But you have repented?" And there was such subtle sympathy in the kind low voice that Cedric's eyes filled with a sudden rush of tears that, ashamed, he strove to hide.

"No; do not be ashamed of tears; be thankful, rather, that you can weep. We are united by a common bond, for I, too, have 'sinned and suffered,' though for *my* sin I have no tears, for I sinned against my heart and—killed it!" said this strange woman, a horror as of memory gathering in her eyes. "It is the *heart* that weeps; so, boy, be thankful you have not killed your heart."

CHAPTER V.

ADRIFT.

. . . "Being observed,
When observation is not sympathy,
Is just being tortured."—*Aurora Leigh.*

"EDITH, I am growing tired of that boy!"

"You don't mean it, Herbert?"

The doctor's sister looked up from the book in her lap with expostulation in her eyes as well as in the tones of her ever-gentle voice.

"I don't? Well, I should like to know why? Here have we been nursing him for over three weeks, and he has never given us the slightest clue to his history, not even a name to call him by. Can you understand it?"

The lady's eyes grew dreamy, looking past the doctor's chair into some thought-realm that he could not pierce. "He may have reasons, Herbert: who knows? I cannot afford to blame him in that he has not confided his name to us."

The doctor fidgeted in his chair; he was a very brave man, but I do not think the direst extremity of pain or peril could have so disconcerted him as that appealing note of his sister's voice, that dark shadow in her eyes that looked like some horror of memory. "Nonsense!" he cried, assuming his usual tone, and rustling the paper in his hand to cover his confusion; "I know what you are doing, Edith; you are investing him with beggary, after the style of your favorite Euripidean heroes, and

making a romantic subject of him generally. I suspect if the truth were known he is a worthless young scapegrace enough. Find out, if you can, what are his plans; he is growing stronger every day, and this sort of thing can't go on forever. I'd have asked him myself, but—confound the boy!—he is non-impressionable as mercury, and you'll go about it in a better way than I can. Suppose you try it now."

She arose with a directness that was characteristic of her, and went up into a little room above stairs, where Cedric sat, near the window, with his head leaning forward on his hand. He was very pale and thin, and, apart from the natural dejection of ill health and spirits, there was a hopeless weariness in the wide blue eyes looking out now over the faded autumn landscape with a gloomy, preoccupied glance, as of one who sees, perforce, but takes no pleasure in the action. He looked around as the lady entered, and, seeing her, smiled a wan smile; then, with a natural impulse of gallantry, rose to his feet, and stood there until she chose to be seated.

"Would it not be more cheerful for you to join my brother and me down-stairs sometimes now that you are stronger?" she asked, commiserating the loneliness of his situation. It was not that she had forgot her errand, but she mistrusted her ability to perform it; the boy was very young, but there were latent reserves of pride and dignity behind his impassable demeanor that, with her womanly quick-sightedness, she looked into; and then she pitied him, poor, blue-eyed, fair-faced lad, he looked so lonely, he seemed so friendless. Her heart yearned towards him,—the heart of a woman who had suffered.

"You offer me the liberty of your house! That is imprudent, Miss Sinclair. How do you know that I will not abuse it?"

The slight, chill smile upon his lips lent to his words a bitterness they might not else have borne. Miss Sinclair's pale face softened yet more; she went over to his side, and put back the falling locks from his brow with a touch tender as a mother's.

"Suffering has made you morbid, my boy; frank natures never indulge in suspicion, and yours is frank, or I am no physiognomist."

"You believe in that?—a shallow theory! Ah, madam, there are influences at work in our natures by which we bid defiance ofttimes to every line of our faces. I wonder that you trust to it."

He spoke with the dreary hopelessness of youth. To the young misery seems so relentless; with hearts open to all the gentlest aspects of life, with spirits that are ready to embrace all the boundless capacities of enjoyment that a gracious world affords, suddenly to see the pall flapping down, down to your very feet, to feel the glad, gay sounds gradually dying away, the sunshine fading, fading; and the paralyzed heart of youth says, "It is forever." For youth is selfish, and Magna Mater is as selfish as her blind young children, let poets sing as they will of nature's subtle sympathy. Ah, the sunlight gilds, the pipes blow, and the glad, gay merriment of the world goes on all the same though hearts be breaking. It is only to the stricken one that the sunlight looks like the darkness of Cimmeria.

"Physiognomy does not govern nature, perhaps, but nature governs physiognomy." The lady's hand still lifted the errant locks from his forehead, and under the gentle tenderness of the action, Cedric, who had long missed the touch of a mother, felt the gloom of his mood lighten and disperse.

He shook his head, however, in reply. "I doubt that

when we remember the head of Socrates and the beauty of Danton."

"You illustrate by exceptions, my boy; but I have come to ask you a question, not to discuss an oft-mooted subject. Come, don't flush up like that! Won't you trust me, child? I am old enough to be your mother."

"You?"

"Yes, I; past all the dangers if all the joys of youth. Listen, if you had a tempestuous channel to cross would you refuse the aid of a pilot?"

"There is no harbor for *me!*" he muttered under his breath, his eyes reverting again to the waste of field and forest outside his window, the dull grays and browns of whose shifting colors seemed to harmonize with the dreariness of his thoughts.

"Oh, do not say that! What though you sail on the open sea all your life, if at the last you find the harbor?" But Cedric was silent, with his chin on his breast.

"I am going away!" he cried at last; "it does not much matter where, but I am going. Do not think I shall abuse your goodness and be hard to shake off. I have only waited to gather a little strength."

Poor boy! he was so wretched and sensitive, and he did not see how the injustice of his words was the bitterest ingratitude of which he could have been capable. But the patience of his companion's glance was the most powerful reproof she could have administered unto him. He grew very confused and ashamed. She stopped his halting apologies with a very gentle, pitiful smile.

"Never mind; you know, I am sure, that we have no wish to be rid of you until you are quite able to help yourself. All we ask, my brother and I, is enough of

your confidence to enable us to help you as far as lies in our power. We deserve so much, do we not?"

Her generosity overcame him; his eyes filled with tears that he trusted her to excuse on the score of his bodily weakness, and the bitterness was gone from his voice when he spoke again.

"You saved my life between you, and I know I should thank you for that; but, oh, you do not see that my life is the very poorest possible gift I could receive at your hands! I am puzzled what use to make of it. A single act of sin and folly has destroyed all its possibilities forever. I owned but yesterday, it seems to me, so much,—father, friends, a wide inheritance; to-day I am nameless and penniless; worse, I am under a ban that can never be lifted. Do not make me repeat it, dear lady,—do not ask me more."

His face was white as death, and the hand that he reached for his hat trembled with the violence of his emotion. He went from her presence, stumbling down the darkened hall with his fingers at his throat, the old irrepressible gesture of his boyhood when intensely moved or annoyed. And the woman whom he had called Miss Sinclair sat on where he had left her, the tears she had lacked for her own troubles flowing freely enough for his.

Down in the garden Blanche, the doctor's little daughter, was playing with a pet kitten, teasing it with a pine cone fastened to the end of a string. Cedric, on his way down the sunny path, stumbled upon the string, and the frail silken bond snapped. Little Blanche was not to be propitiated.

"Go away, bad sick man!" she cried. "Were you blind to break my kitty's string? Go away!"

"There, it is quite strong again. See, Blanche, I

have made it stronger than before," he pleaded, his misery forgotten momentarily in his vain efforts to appease his benefactor's little daughter.

"I won't have it,—it is ugly! Who wants an old knotted, broken string?" screamed wilful Blanche. "Stop!" And she snatched it from him, winding it around her soft baby hands in a vain endeavor to break it, until the silk cut into her dimpled flesh, and made her cry more with the pain now than anger.

"See, it is strong enough to hurt you, if you will not play with it; for shame, little one!"

"Go away!" the embryo tyrant shrieked, infuriated and humiliated in all her baby body. "Go away; I hate you, bad, ugly, *thin*,—sick man! Your legs look like ladders,—nursie says so,—and your eyes are—are *ugly*—big! I quite believe what nursie says,—I do!"

"And what *does* 'nursie' say, you small tigress?" asked the "thin—sick man," his "*ugly*—big" eyes catching a gleam of their old-time laughter.

"She says—she says you *killed* somebody 'way down in the country, and you have runned off here to keep from getting hunged,' and I *know* it's true. All the people in Willams say so. Ugh, ugly, thin man! you'd better not let my papa hear it, he'd,—he'd *make* a jail to *hung* you in himself, and I'd help him! Oh, I would,—you needn't look so white with your big eyes—I *would*, I *would!* and I'd get a string *much*, *much* tougher than this to put around your neck," rubbing her own bruised hands with infinite relish.

Blanche watched the "ugly thin—man" as he turned from her and went down into the bottom of the garden, and in her little heart felt some distinct qualms of remorse, his face had turned so white and his "long legs" shook so as he walked. There he leaned against the

grape-arbor, and he did not put up his hands to pick a single grape.

She crept a few paces nearer him and cried in a high, defiant voice,—

"Eat the grapes if you will, nobody cares!" but he did not seem to hear her. Then, after a long, thoughtful pause, she darted to where he stood, and, catching his sleeve, implored, with her two wistful, regretful eyes, notice of her small self.

"Well, little one, what is it?"

"They *are* all saying so, *everybody*, but I told a story when I said I believed it, for I *don't!* and—and—you ain't, ugly, *only* thin and sick!"

He touched the brown curls with fingers that quivered.

"Thank you, little Blanche!"

And Blanche ran to find her nurse, surprising her by a remarkable decorum for some hours thereafter.

How the old myths repeat themselves in every age, in every generation. In vain did Midas by innumerable devices seek to hide his secret: the very reeds shaking in the wind babbled of it, the very ground beneath his feet betrayed him.

Up in the chamber that had sheltered him during the long, weary days of his fever and delirium Cedric Cheswick sat long after the household had retired for the night. By the dawn he must be far away from Willams, but he would fortify himself by a moment of steady thought before he set out on his unknown path. He had not accepted little Blanche's angry babble literally, but it served to open his eyes to his danger. People were beginning to talk about him and to speculate concerning him. That he could ill afford; a man under a ban as he was, whose only safety from the grip of the law, which is unerring and relentless as a sleuth-hound on the scent

of its prey, lay in his concealed identity. He had given the doctor's man the clothes in which he had left Cheswick, and substituted for them a rough suit of brown; his watch he would leave behind him, a plain hunting-case that his father had given him on his sixteenth birthday. He was emaciated and weary-eyed,—as little Blanche had said, "ugly,—thin." With the huge, flapping felt hat he had bought in Willams pulled down over his brows, in his rough clothes and altered aspect, surely Jacob Martin might have passed him by as a stranger. For Rick, at Cheswick, had often been obliged to take some banter concerning his fastidious habits. "Rick's a swell!" Rabys had said once, at college, with that underlying venom that had characterized his relations with his foster-brother from their earliest connection. "But Rick can afford to be; he has the principle of all those boshy old chronicles in the library to sustain. Rick is a patrician; I'm a plebeian, perhaps; but if he don't look out I'll play a trick on him yet, for I'm my father's Jacob!"

Yes, Cedric to-day—worn by illness and despair, in his uncomely apparel—looked little enough like the Cedric of old, clear-eyed and resolute in the graceful guise of a gentleman, with the *bonhomie* and beauty of a whole race of Cheswicks blooming anew in his person.

He leaned his head on his hand and pondered, while the darkness grew deeper, what he should do, what path of honorable pursuit lay open before him. Or, rather, he thought when he sat down that he would, before he left, ferret out a way to help himself. He meant, by dint of determination and shrewd judgment, to strike upon some plan by which he might hold his life in some sort of shape. And after this fashion he set about his cogitations:

He had barely enough money to meet the exigencies of life for a short time. Where would he be safe?—safe from

the law for a while,—for, sooner or later, that tragedy enacted in the depth of Cheswick wood will be traced to its source, and he, the last of the Cheswicks, would be called upon to expiate his crime as though he were the veriest beggar on God's earth!

That was the end of his cogitation.

When Œdipus sought to stifle the memory of his crime in the narrow Phocian way with the splendors of his Theban kingdom, did he dream of the pestilence that was approaching on the wings of the wind, slowly though surely, and of the voice that would cry therefrom for the blood of murdered Laius? Perhaps not, but it came at last,—retribution,—and he who of all the world alone had unriddled the mighty mystery of the Sphinx, he who in the noonday glory of his pride and strength had aspired to a place among the gods, came at last, blind and miserable, to die in the Cave of the Furies! Why did those idle fables arise in his memory to sting him? "It was murder!" he groaned, looking down into the fading embers that gave back to his glance but that one unfading scene in Cheswick wood of Rabys Holme bleeding and dead,—killed by *his* hand! "It was murder! I *turned back* to meet him in the wood-path, and I knew if he dared open his lips to me I would strike the craven breath out of his body.

"It was murder, and for murder there is but one expiation,—a life for a life, the old law! Yet if I could bring you back, Rabys; if I could but awake to find it a hideous dream, I would be willing to endure toil, pain, privation, oh, what not of bodily anguish! But to what purpose shall I struggle, to what purpose shall I endure, with this sin on my soul, whose wages is death!"

From his breast, where his fingers had involuntarily closed on the treasure hid there, he drew forth the single

souvenir he had dared keep of his pure and happy youth, —a ring, Amy's gift to him on his twenty-first birthday, his last.

"Why did you choose this ominous Nemesis, little one, for my constant guide and companion?" he had asked, when, with dimpling smiles all over her sweet face, she had slipped it on his finger six months ago.

"Ah, it is just as you choose to make it, Cedric," she had said, wise little Amy, whose conceits were so quaint. "It is only to the bad Nemesis wears a frowning aspect; the good she rewards. See, I chose it because I want you to think always how one or the other of the angels wins in the soul of man. So when you follow the lead of your white angel Nemesis will reward you with good gifts, and if—if at any time the black should conquer, you would all the same be unable to escape her, for she is inviolate on sea or land; her fingers close over the helm and the wheel."

And he had listened with boyish phrases of delight, and had called her a "wise little woman."

"But your Nemesis shall only have good gifts for me, sweetest, because I mean to keep my white angel always just where she is now," and with that he had whispered an epithet into her ear that had brought the bright blood in torrents to her face.

It was later than he thought when he turned from these bitter-sweet memories to the realities in the midst of which he sat. There was no longer any time to decide what to do. It was past the midnight, and by morning he must be far enough away from Willams. The taunts of little Blanche had served to open his eyes to his danger. Only the innocent could sit down in safety the guests of honest people; for the fugitive, the homicide, there was but the hastening step, the listening coward ear

that hears in the rustle of every leaf the step of the executioner.

He moved about his room, and with his old instinct of order and fastidiousness set it all carefully to rights. He wrote a brief note of thanks, and left it with his watch on the table where "Miss Sinclair" would not fail to discover them. He covered up the embers on the hearth, thinking the while how all the glowing aspirations of his youth were blotted out beneath the ashes of desolation gathered by his own hand; then he stood on the threshold of the hospitable chamber that had sheltered him in his weakness and desolation, and invoked a blessing upon his benefactors, the honest, kind doctor, gentle "Miss Sinclair," the imperious baby Blanche. "O God, my hands are blood-stained!" he cried, as horror at the thought of so great a sinner as he daring to address the All-Righteous One entered like iron into his soul.

Then he went quietly down through the sleeping house and out through the gate of the garden into the white, frozen road, again a fugitive, again adrift, with no hope in the present, no goal in the future.

CHAPTER VI.

CHESWICK.

"A past foretells a future."

It is meet, after having taken you in through the great hall and introduced you to the master and son in the library and the lady in the drawing-room, that I pilot you along the different corridors of this fine old mansion, lest at any time you lose your way therein. True hospitality consists in making your guests free to come and go at will in your households, and yet the best regulated families would not care to admit visitors into their kitchens at all hours. However, the time is come, now that you have seen the state apartments of Cheswick, for me to take you into the remote chambers that the world never sees.

Eleven years ago Cedric's mother died, and Mr. Cheswick called in to the care of his only child his sole surviving sister, Miss Barbara Cheswick, a maiden lady of fifty, who attended to the boy's physical wants, and petted him injudiciously as the most doting father could have desired. Not that Robert Cheswick was a doting father, or even an affectionate one, in the general sense of the term. He was satisfied that Cedric's rights to be a Cheswick were indubitable by an inheritance of the Cheswick traits, as well as the blood, and there he fancied his feeling for his son ended. But if the boy had been killed by one of the colts he was forever "breaking in," or

carried off by one or another of the epidemics that constantly prevailed in the marshy little village at the foot of the mountain, Mr. Cheswick would have experienced a more fatherly pang than he supposed possible to himself, for the bold brave nature inherent in the boy bore a strange ring of his own, and, whether he knew it or not, Cedric's future was a matter of vast importance to him.

The boy, accustomed to the gloomy quiet of his father's moods, or the much-to-be-dreaded though infrequent bursts of his anger, kept out of his way generally and grew up without knowing much more of him than did the world at large. His mother had been his sole companion and teacher, and he surprised the neighborhood with the violence of his grief when, on the day of her burial, he had flung himself on her new-made grave and resisted all efforts to take him away for hours.

Robert Cheswick's heart had been stirred by some unwonted emotions at sight of his motherless boy's sorrow, but he did not encourage the tender mood, and, immersing himself afresh in his books and his business, he left the child to Miss Barbara's guardianship, and thrust away from him the haunting memory of the sad-faced woman, his mother, whom he had never loved.

A year after the death of Mrs. Cheswick an event occurred that changed the whole tenor of the future for the inmates of Cheswick Hall. The family, consisting of Mr. Cheswick, Cedric, and Miss Barbara, was at tea. Jacob Martin brought in the letter-bag, gave it into his master's hand, and retired. Jacob's wife, Amanda, Miss Barbara's chief assistant, stood behind her mistress, quietly attentive and on the alert. Mr. Cheswick emptied the papers out upon the table; a letter slipped to the floor. He stooped with a reddening face and picked

it up. Cedric, taking advantage of his father's absorption, slipped from his place at the table and escaped to the library, where he had left a very interesting problem in chess only half worked out.

"Barbara," said Mr. Cheswick, when he had folded the sheet carefully and readjusted it in the envelope, "I have something strange to tell you." Miss Barbara settled her spectacles and looked at him inquiringly above them. "Rabys Holme is dying, and he writes for me to come and take his boy."

"You, Robert, *you!*" cried old Miss Cheswick, fiery gleams in her sunken black eyes. "He dares ask that of you?"

Mr. Cheswick stirred his coffee mechanically.

"And his wife? what does he say of his wife?"

A flush crept slowly up to Robert Cheswick's temples, where gray hairs mingled with the fair curling locks of his closely-cut hair. "She left him years ago, and it has been the one aim of his life to keep the knowledge of her child's whereabouts a secret from her."

"He took her child!" Some womanly commiseration was making Miss Barbara's eyes soft.

"He asks me to take his child and keep him, as he has done, from all knowledge of his mother."

"And you?" Miss Barbara's voice, low and quiet as it was, rang like a challenge.

"I will do it!" he answered, bringing his clinched fist down upon the table with a force that made the china and silver jingle. "I will do it!"

"You may go, 'Manda," ordered Miss Barbara to the Abigail behind her chair, and when the door closed behind her, she leaned over the silver, the little black curls on either side of her temples shaking with the vehemence of her warning. "Take care how you do this thing,

Robert Cheswick, take care! Your vengeance may recoil upon yourself."

"Nonsense, Barbara! I will bring him here, treat him as my own son, and give him equal chances with Cedric; what better could happen to the boy?"

"Nonsense!" echoed Miss Barbara. "You will care for him not through any generous feeling to your foe, Robert Cheswick, but because you will like to think of *her* desolate in her old age as she made *you* in your youth."

Mr. Cheswick pushed back his chair with a mighty clatter and rose from the table, his forehead crimson. "Are you mad, to revive that old folly of my youth, Barbara! It matters little to you, I should think, with what motive I shall undertake the care of Rabys Holme's boy. He comes, that is a certain fact. If you think the additional charge will be too much for you, you have only to say so."

And he did come one stormy December evening, when Miss Barbara and Cedric were bidding each other good-night on the upper landing of the hall. There was the sound of a door opening, a great rush of wind that nearly extinguished the light Cedric held, and he turned to see his father leading in from the porch a boy of about his own size, so wrapped and muffled that nothing was to be seen of his face but a pair of large black eyes that looked frightened and irritable at once.

"Come down, Rick!" shouted his father. "Now shake hands, youngsters!" as Cedric came, obedient to his call, and stood before him.

Cedric boldly extended his hand, but little Holme shrank farther back into the angle of the hall.

"What! won't make up? That's because he's hungry and tired. Take him off to Aunt Bab, Rick, and,

see here, his name is Rabys. Off with you now, and be good friends."

But Rabys declared he was not hungry, in a sulky way that was a revelation to the little Cedric, sunny and insouciant himself, except when moved, which was not often, to the quick anger of his race.

It was dull work propitiating his father's ward on that first night, but Cedric noticed that, notwithstanding his avowal to the contrary, he *was* hungry, and ate unrestrainedly of the bountiful lunch Aunt Bab set for him, making repeated raids upon the preserve dish.

Cedric further observed that he was a very handsome boy, with well formed and regular features, and hair soft and silken as a girl's. But he met all his smiling overtures with silence and an ominous frown above his soft dark eyes, so that it was a relief when Miss Barbara came and took him off to bed.

Rabys did not improve upon acquaintance. The two boys were antagonistic from the first. They might have been of different species so far as their sensations and perceptions were concerned. There was the difference of the eagle and the mole between them: the light shone alike in the eye of both, but while the one gloried in it and sought to draw nearer ever the divine source of effulgence, the other burrowed on blind and unconscious.

It did not help him in his honest effort to make a companion of Rabys when he found his father making a pet of him; his father who, beyond the slightest concern for his welfare, had never appeared to notice him. And Rabys, who was wilful and insolent to everybody about the premises, and from the first defiant of Miss Barbara's gentle rule, never failed in strict obedience and respect to his foster-father. Miss Barbara, angered one day by some unusual defiance on Rabys's part, made a remark in Cedric's

hearing that he never forgot, and that added to his prejudice of Rabys in after-years when, as was natural, his father's partiality to the son of a stranger came to be talked about in the neighborhood. "The young rascal!" she had said, "he knows on which side his bread is buttered, and he's shrewd enough to keep that side up!"

Cedric was not conscious of the fact, but this remark of his aunt, made thoughtlessly and in anger, rendered him suspicious of Rabys, where before he had only been intolerant. The boy was frank and open as light, but he was very lonely, and when he saw Rabys revelling in the warmth of his father's favor, of which so little had been vouchsafed him during his lonely boyhood, he grew angry and suspicious of the intruder, the more that his behavior was so questionable.

The years went on, and if Cedric had not come to make the query that Locke thought inevitable under such training, "Father, when will you die?" he had at least come to the conclusion that the task of trying to win over his father was a thankless one, and might as well be given up.

If Mr. Cheswick, suffering with gout by this time and sevenfold harder to please in consequence, had even surmised the struggle going on in his son's breast, he would have been more surprised than words could have expressed. He believed that the proper plan to rear a child was at arm's length. Respect was an all-important ingredient in a child's relations with a father, respect amounting to veneration, which ingredient, if the child be allowed the familiar footing of a companion, falls a sacrifice, of course. He congratulated himself upon the success of his theory, and was very proud of Cedric as he grew to manhood. True, the boy had some soft, girlish ways that he had inherited from his mother,—a trick of

gazing at sunsets and reading poetry, and a wild love of music, which he had given him time and means to cultivate. There were some stray notions of delicacy and harmony in his head more befitting a woman than the last of the Cheswicks, but on the whole Cedric was a success in his father's mind, and had developed wonderfully from the thin, fair-faced child into the tall, athletic stripling that brought back to the gloomy, gray-haired man faint bitter memories of his own proud and gracious youth.

And with these thoughts in his mind he would look at his boy gazing up into the sunsets from his library window, little dreaming that his heart was aching with its weight of affection thrust back upon it. When at his mother's piano in the lonely parlor divine harmonies would float out across the hall and arrest Mr. Cheswick's attention in spite of himself, he little thought that the deep longing for sympathy in the boy's soul drove him to the solitude that was teeming with the memory of his mother's love, and that in the affluence of his home his only son stood a very beggar, hungering for the love his father denied him.

Oh, foolish human hearts that cover up your tenderest impulses with a mask of indifference, and deem you act wisely in so doing, if you could but know of the direful results that too often follow!

Rabys was a sprightly fellow, a happy-go-lucky sort of a lad, who always brought a bright face into his guardian's library, and interested him by dint of his persistent demands upon his time and attention. Then, as the boy grew older, his avowed preference for his guardian, his obedience and ready compliance with all his commands flattered him, and so, more because Rabys managed it than that Mr. Cheswick preferred it, this state of affairs had come about.

Absorbed in his books and the business of his estates, Mr. Cheswick failed to observe how gradually the boys were becoming estranged from each other. Occasionally Rabys complained of Cedric's coldness, whereupon Cedric was severely reprimanded; but no complaints were made of Rabys, except, perhaps, at the stables, where his imperious temper was dreaded alike by horse and groom.

To these Mr. Cheswick generally turned a deaf ear, conciliated beforehand by Rabys's excuse: "Rick moons his time away over books, you know, and what use would my vacation be if I didn't get some sport out of the horses?"

But Jacob Martin could have told his master, had he chosen, that the sport often ended in Rabys riding home half-drunk in the early gray dawn, with the mare reeking with foam, and marked with the whip from wether to flank.

It was when the boys were both nineteen that a widowed cousin of Mr. Cheswick died, and he found himself called upon out of common humanity to offer her only child, a girl of tender years, an asylum at Cheswick Hall. He was generous as a prince with his means, and, won by the lonely, sweet face of the orphan, made her very welcome at Cheswick; ordered a new piano in place of the old one that had so long occupied the niche opposite Cedric's organ, and bought a pony phaeton so that she would not find it too dull at Cheswick.

Miss Barbara was scandalized at the thought of another orphan to rear, "and a girl, with frowzy head and furbelowed pinafore!" for, like most old maids, she entertained a suspicious scorn of her sex; so to Miss Barbara Amy Randolph was a pleasant surprise. "To think I dreaded your coming!" she would say, looking over to where Amy sat, plying some dainty feminine work, and

flushing up to her gentle eyes with pleasure at the old lady's approval. "To think I dreaded you! why, my dear, I have not had as much real comfort since I came here!"

It was just at this time that an open rupture occurred between Cedric and Rabys.

Miss Barbara was called into the library one evening soon after the mail had been brought in. She found her brother fluttering an open letter in his hand in one of his moods of positive vexation, which Miss Bab, from long experience, had learned to dread.

"Read this," he cried, "and tell me is the boy a fool or mad!"

The old lady looked up after its perusal with a flush on her worn face. "If you mean Rabys," she said with emphasis, "I should say he was a fool."

"Tush!" said her brother, "that is of a piece with the tricks he has always played, the boy means nothing; but Rick, the arrogant young scamp, what does he mean?"

"Well, do you believe the half of this statement," asked his sister, quietly, though her keen old eyes were flashing. It angered her to see her brother always unjust to his own flesh and blood, and ever so ready to make excuses for the strangers.

"Believe it! Why should I not? Rabys never lied to me."

"And did Rick?"

"No!" thundered Rick's father, indignant at the bare insinuation that a son of his and a Cheswick could stoop to dishonor; "I have not heard from Rick on the subject, unless that ridiculous request of his about coming home before his course is ended has something to do with it."

"You may be sure it has, else why would Cedric wish

to leave? He has had no trouble with the professors. I can see straight through it," added Miss Bab, as indeed she might with those keen bright eyes, which, as Proctor said of Charles Lamb's, "looked as though they might pick up pins and needles." "Rick wants to get away before the trial, because he fears his evidence may help to condemn Rabys."

"Rabys says *all* the Seniors were in it," and Mr. Cheswick read from the letter on the table: "It was a lark, we meant no more than if we had taken the grapes from a vine outside the window; the deuced thing of it was that we broke the lock" (Rabys neglected to mention the fact that his own knife was the sole accomplice with himself in that deed). "All the Seniors were in it, and now Rick turns luny and means to run away."

"The young scamp!" cried Miss Barbara. "He would make us believe by his half-truth that our Rick was of the party. Oh, I told you, Robert, that no good would come of your bringing Rabys Holme to Cheswick."

"Don't be silly, Bab. You were prejudiced against the boy from the first. Why can't Rick write his own statement; confound the boy, he is as reticent, as stiff, and distant with me as though I were the veriest stranger!"

"And whose fault is that, Robert? I would like to know," interrupted Miss Bab, warm in the defence of her darling. "You have held him at arm's length all his life; you never encouraged his confidence in the smallest degree. Why, I have seen you notice Rabys Holme more in a day than you would Rick in months."

"Go along, Bab! I see I have all I will get of you; your partiality blinds you as it does with women. I might have known your advice would be worth nothing."

Miss Bab laughed, rising from her chair and scraping an imaginary spot off the cuff of her sleeve. "And you

relish hearing the truth of yourself as little as most men ; but my advice, if you care for it, is let Rick come home, or go see about it yourself, for I know Rick, and he'll stick to that thankless young scapegrace while there is breath in his body !"

Well, the trouble ended in Mr. Cheswick's having business up North, which called him college-way, and the affair was settled satisfactorily, though in a manner known only to the parties concerned. The boys resumed their course, which was to terminate with diplomas that year, and Mr. Cheswick refused to regard it in any other light than as one of Rabys's larks, though he found less fault than usual with Cedric's part of the proceedings. Indeed, he inwardly exulted at the brave, generous nature of the boy, who, to save his foster-brother from the merited consequences of his reckless behavior, would have sacrificed his ambition, if not his reputation, for there were those among the college renegades who would gladly have held him up to view as a coward, seeing that he chose to leave rather than implicate Rabys by a confession of how he had warned him and in every way endeavored to induce him to give over the absurd piece of folly he contemplated.

Encouraged by his father's kindness, Cedric ventured to remonstrate with him on the subject of his indulgence of Rabys.

"Forgive me if I seem to dictate, but indeed, sir, you are much too generous in your allowance to Rabys. We are thrown with a wild set here, and his unlimited means are often, I fear, a source of temptation to him."

"Well, I'll think of it ; meanwhile keep an eye on him, Rick."

"No need to tell me that, father ; but Rabys will not brook anything like interference from me ; he would be

sure to set it down to the meanest of motives. We never have been able to assimilate in a single idea." The boy said it with a sigh.

His father laid his hand on his shoulder for an instant, looking down upon the strong brave face with genuine fatherly pride. "Ah, well, my boy," and Cedric's heart bounded at the epithet that sounded like a caress, "you are a Cheswick and he a Holme: perhaps it is not so astonishing as you think that you do not assimilate," and the haughty old aristocrat turned on his heel and left his son to ponder on his meaning.

Late on the evening of Mr. Cheswick's departure, Rabys came up to the dormitory which he shared with Cedric, flushed and scowling, a dangerous evil light in his handsome black eyes that were usually soft and laughing as a girl's.

"So you have been set up as a sort of *custus morum* over my character, eh, my fine fellow? *You*, a chicken-hearted coward, who would have run away rather than have stayed to help an old comrade through a scrape!" And the oath that ended the sentence rang strangely from those fresh young lips. "I am to have my allowance shortened, am I? I am to be kept an eye upon by you,—I, a Holme, and you, a Cheswick, who cannot assimilate!"

Cedric had looked up at his entrance, his eyes still wearing that new look of happiness that his father's tone had brought there; but as Rabys poisoned the pure air of the room with the reeking fumes of his breath and the bitter oaths with which he emphasized his sneers, the happy light died out of them, and swift anger leaped to them instead.

"Go to bed, Rabys; you are not yourself," he said. "I think had my father realized your situation he would not have left you here."

"He knows more than enough, thanks to your tattling!" cried the infuriated young man.

"If you heard me tell him of your danger you must have been in hiding, for I do not remember that any one beside ourselves was in the library at the time. But you were welcome to what you heard, Rabys, and just here I warn you that if you do not mend your ways I shall enlighten my father next time concerning the nature of some of your 'larks,' so that he may see for himself the danger you are in of disgracing yourself. And as regards your insults to me, sir, I further warn you to conduct yourself like a gentleman in the future, unless you are quite ready to abide by the consequences of not doing so."

When Cedric regarded him with those steady eyes of his grown cold and stern, and spoke to him in that unfaltering tone of voice, Rabys dimly comprehended through the fumes of the liquor that confused his brain that his foster-brother was thoroughly in earnest. He sat in utter silence, angered, it is true, but also surprised and dismayed. In all these years Cedric had never come to an open rupture with him. His long-suffering endurance had found a limit at last, and, dazed as he was, Rabys understood that his peccadilloes, major and minor, must henceforth be concealed from his foster-brother if he would continue in favor with his guardian at Cheswick Hall. As Miss Bab had said, years ago, "He knew which side his bread was buttered on," and while he hated the bold nature that had dared set terms to him and force him into even a seeming compliance, he also feared it, and he and Cedric were foes from henceforth *à outrance*.

Thanks to the hand that held him thus in leash, Rabys passed his examination, and at the end of the scholastic year the two went home to Cheswick.

CHAPTER VII.

AN IDYL.

"Time is eternity, love is divine, and the world is complete!"
Rhapsody on Life's Progress.

And now, for the first time since his mother's death, Cheswick seemed home to Cedric. He was no longer the silent, reserved lad, seeking companionship only with his beloved organ and the volumes in his father's library, or Duffer out in the paddock. The light that his father's kind words had brought to his eyes on the memorable occasion that had called him to visit his son and ward at the university came there often now, imparting such warmth and gladness to his face that the dullest servant of the house might have remarked upon the change. Not that his father was more fatherly toward him, for Rabys was more constantly with him now than ever before, and that of itself would have kept his son aloof. But the atmosphere of the place seemed changed. In Aunt Bab's sitting-room Amy was sure to be found during the long, warm morning hours, ready for any demands upon her time or attention; and who could retain a memory for troubles in the presence of that bright, soft, sympathetic creature, who, when he came in fresh from an encounter with Rabys, openly insolent now, or annoyed at his father's impatient demands that he should make more of a companion of his foster-brother, would laughingly assail the shadows on his face, or, like a dainty, smiling

Diogenes, if such a conception be possible to the imagination, would order him out of her sunshine.

Of course it was only after weeks of companionship that he thus began to feel dependent upon the new inmate of Cheswick, his father's ward and distant cousin's child. Little Amy was frightened at the idea of Cheswick's being invaded by two such tall, wise-looking young men as the *coupé* set down before the portico on the lovely June evening that brought them home. Of the two she found Rabys less formidable. His insouciance and careless merriment were very reassuring to the timid little girl, who until her mother's death had never passed a moment of her life alone. But she was not long in discovering the basis of egotism that sustained his easy temperament, and while she was too young and inexperienced to read the concomitants of his character, she found him altogether unsatisfying as the days went by. It puzzled her to understand Cedric's relations with his father, for discreet Miss Bab had forborne to bring to light a single skeleton in the family closet, and she wondered the more when she noted the gentle caressing nature of his manner to his old aunt, who smoothed his hair and kissed her boy's cheek twenty times a day, as she had used to do when he was a little fellow in pinafores.

It was not until they discovered that they shared a taste in common that the ice of reserve was broken between this young pair. Amy, never having heard that the heir of Cheswick claimed the niche where the organ stood as his own peculiar province, was given to monopolizing the opposite corner so persistently that Cedric had found small opportunity to indulge in his favorite recreation. It happened that she became enlightened after this wise: Feeling lonely and homesick for the gentle mother's love she missed so often and so sorely, she stole in the twilight

to the piano as to a haven of refuge. Like all true musicians she knew something of that "divine circle" whereof Schumann writes, for as the waves of harmony closed around her she forgot her loneliness, and the tears that had blinded her eyes when she sat down cleared away gradually until in her heart remained only gratitude and peace. "Nearer to God in my art am I than others," said the great Beethoven. "It is but of Him I think, it is all to His glory," said Handel, with tears streaming down his face, as he labored through the mighty strains of the "Messiah," and Amy, to whom music was as dear, as exalting and ennobling, if more limited in its meaning, as it ever was to one of those old masters, played on in the twilight as I have told you, until all the aching loneliness left her heart, and it became filled with a sweet sense of security.

Cedric, who was lying on the sofa at the farther end of the long room, and whom the evening shadows concealed, watched her through her different phases of emotion, and heaved a deep sigh of relief when she struck the opening chords of Beethoven's Sonata in A, for he was musician enough to feel that her mood must be softening indeed, else she had never launched so bravely into those hopeful strains. He listened delightedly until she reached the appassionata movement, then arose and went over to her side.

"You here!" said Amy, with a little start of dismay; "I did not see you when I came in."

"Your eyes were too full of tears, little one," he said, playfully, covering her confusion with a candid smile. "You are better now, so let us leave the appassionata for another time, it would set you to weeping again. I am glad, indeed, you understand this language, it will be a bond between us, little cousin. Listen, now, and tell me

what does this say to you?" Whereupon he moved over to the organ, and much to her wonderment sat down before it, sweeping the keys with a masterly hand.

"That is new to me," said Amy, when he had finished, "but it sounds very hopeful and full of comfort."

"So it always has to me," said Cedric, his eyes glistening with pleasure. "It is Chopin's Polonaise in C minor; you will find it in that stack of music if you care to study it." Then, after a pause, "Who superintended your music, my small cousin?"

"Mamma; I had a master a few months only before her death," tears filling her eyes at the memory. "Why do you ask, am I very far wrong?" she queried, with a little very natural trepidation,—this tall young man seemed very wise and superior to foolish little Amy.

"I think, if you will, we will study together. That appassionata, for instance; would you mind trying it on the organ?"

"I am afraid," said Amy, "but if you really wish it——" and she proceeded to obey him.

"What is it?" he asked, laughing at the perplexed face she lifted to view.

"Why, it is all disjointed and unconnected, *not* my favorite appassionata at all."

"It is just this, Amy, you have lapsed into a careless habit of execution, and while to most ears you can cover the deficiency on the piano, the organ betrays it. You have exquisite taste, but your execution is scarcely as neat as it should be. That is a fault, however, that judicious application will soon mend, so don't look so miserable over it, or I shall be obliged to take myself to task for interfering officiously."

"Indeed you need not," protested Amy, emphatically, forgetting she had ever felt frightened at this tall, serious

young man, who stood there looking down upon her so kindly. "Mamma always said I was a lazy little thing, but she never exacted much of me. If you will help me, indeed, I shall feel so grateful, and will try not to give you much trouble."

"Nonsense!" said Cedric, "the trouble will all be on your side. It will be pleasant to me to think that I can be of use to somebody."

As the days grew longer Cedric and Amy studied other things than music out under the great mulberry on the lawn, while Rabys lolled on the sward and anathematized the heat, the country, everything that had to do with humanity in the dog days. "Our Academia," Amy called it, laughingly,—the rustic reat under the mulberry, with its green, cool shade and vase of bright, blooming flowers.

"And Rick's Plato, is he?" sneered Rabys, with his insulting laugh. "Rare old prig he was, too. What did he do, anyway?"

"Why," said Amy, answering literally, "he sat under the sacred olives, you know, and talked to the people among the statues and sepulchres of the great, away from the din and dust of the city. He taught them wisdom and gentleness out there by the river banks with the beautiful sights and sounds of nature always about them."

And Rabys, to whom "the beautiful sights and sounds of nature" meant only unmitigated boredom, and who would have given "all the statues and sepulchres of the great," had they been his to give, for "the din and dust of the city" Amy had so pathetically decried, treated them to one of his rich, ringing peals of laughter, and left them to their readings, their amicable arguments, and steadily-growing delight in each other's society.

"How beautifully you read!" she said to him one day. "I think you must fill Austen's requirements for a perfect reader; 'the words fall from the lips like newly-minted coins, deeply and accurately impressed, and perfectly finished.'"

And praise was new to Cedric, as it had been to the young Buonarotti, when at the Magnifico's smile he threw himself in almost servile admiration at his feet. And sweeter to him even than her praise was this growing feeling that at last he was necessary to some one's happiness. When he heard her asking his Aunt Bab in her clear, girlish tones, "Where is Cedric?" when, after a day's hunt among the cliffs, he caught a glimpse of her sweet face on the portico, evidently watching for him, life took on an entirely different aspect to any it had ever worn for him before, and every day brought its full meed of intense pleasure, were the skies dark or fair.

As I have told you, he was given to analyzing even impulse itself, but he did not pause to analyze this feeling that was growing stronger with the days. He only knew that "he had nothing to wish for beneath the sky," and that while Thekla had sung that from despair, to him it was an utterance of his heartfelt joy. He did not go farther and say, with Thekla, "I have loved and been loved;" that was left for another day; now he had quite enough to do to enjoy the present and what it brought,—the sense of companionship and sympathy and unison with another in thought and feeling, to all of which he had been a stranger all his life. Young, impulsive, loving, the training he had undergone ought reasonably to have fostered in him a taste for solitude, but it seemed only to have served to quicken all the importunate demands of his nature, and he told himself he had been starved of such aliment all his life that he might enjoy its full flavor in

one delicious draught when his time came, as it surely had come now. The heart of his young companion was so simple and noble; as he came to know her better he saw into her nature as she little dreamed, recognizing such fair proportions as he had scarcely credited humanity with. For, like most lonely, disappointed youth with opportunities in their own experiences of observing the inconsistencies and contradictions in character, he held a lofty sort of disdain for human nature in the abstract, and looked out upon it as Dante might have done when, without the gates of his idolized Florence, he was fain to listen to the triumphs of the factions or the gay music of the festa, feeling only that he was *outside*, debarred from the life of the city for which he hungered; or, as Savonarola, before the hand of destiny was upon him, might have looked in his lonely youth from the convent windows, looked down with those resplendent blue eyes growing sad and pain-stricken over the wickedness and shameful riot of the fair city.

It was with this sad, wondering semi-disdain that our Cedric was given to contemplating the world. He was to discover, as did that *animo sdegnoso* of the twelfth century, that the world, well used, yields to us some of our highest, choicest blessings, and that he who ignores its just claims has too often to pay the penalty in some added suffering to his life. But now there was no thought of future discipline, there was only the splendid consciousness of the present. You may smile if you will, but you will not dare mock this idyl of young innocent love. You may be old, earth-worn, weary; you may be sneering, scoffing, cynical, but you can remember —oh, yes, you have not forgotten—the strength and fervor of the love that long ago, in your early youth, perhaps, made life so fair and joyous unto you. You know

that in all the years you have not been offered a sweeter draught than that, in all your endeavors you have found no earthly prize as well worth the winning. You were happy then, with a secret, unowned gladness that made the humblest thing in God's great world an object of reverence to you. And if you have carried that first unworn love in your heart through all the years, feeling it grow stronger, sweeter, purer as your life wears on, then indeed have you found Enna meads amid the stubbles of daily experience, where Peace and Joy have attended as handmaidens upon your footsteps.

CHAPTER VIII.

TURNED WEAPONS.

"Who hunts doth oft in danger ride;
Who hawks lures oft, both far and wide;
Who uses games shall often prove
A loser."—*The Angler's Song:* IZAAK WALTON.

AND so the summer hours danced into their very graves, filling their receding footsteps with flowers like those fair painted forms that smile down upon us from Correggio's shadowy canvas.

Miss Bab, looking well to the ways of the household and eating not the bread of idleness, saw nothing of the tender idyl that was being lived before her eyes. Mr. Cheswick, Aristotelian in all his doctrines, save where his temper was concerned, buried himself in his peripatetic indulgences, and never came quite out of them except when he was forced to do so by Rabys, whose complaints of the dulness of Cheswick were growing "fast and furious."

When the boys came home from the university they were offered by Mr. Cheswick a year of freedom, in which each should come to a definite conclusion in regard to his purpose in life; "for," said this very consistent old gentleman, making a quotation in point from Pindar touching upon the value and necessity of riches, "every young man should start with a legitimate aim in life, else are his energies dwarfed and his possibilities unawakened. Come to me at the end of the year and let me hear your conclusion. If I think it the best, all things considered, I

shall not withhold my approval and assistance." So, conceiving that he had done not only his duty, but a very generous thing also in offering Rabys Holme's son an equal chance with his own, he left them to their own devices.

In the early autumn Rabys left Cheswick for a visit to one of his classmates. He returned more discontented and restless than ever. This year, which so far had been replete with pleasure and improvement to Cedric, was very tiresome and slow in passing to him. While he fretted and fumed and chafed in the lonely atmosphere of Cheswick, Cedric grew strong and cheerful as he had never done before.

"What is it they do in the parlor all through these long evenings," he wondered, "while Aunt Bab goes to sleep over her knitting? I will stay and see." For he had grown utterly sick of the public room at the Catoctin House, the miserable tavern in the village, having tested its resources thoroughly in the months since he had left college. "I should like to know what satisfies him so entirely that he seems content to be buried like this."

It was the old story of the mole burrowing in the dark. It was not given to Rabys to discern that it was because Cedric attached its due importance to the very least monad in his small world that he rested so well satisfied; that to his keen, just perceptions was to be attributed the measure of his content; to the strong, capable nature that made the most of everything that came in its way; and least of all did he know of the secret influences at work with his life. "I will stay and judge for myself," he said. And so it happened that Rabys was introduced—a foreign element—into the harmonious atmosphere of the long parlor, where Miss Bab, a very unconscious, drowsy duenna, sat half dozing over her knitting in the ruddy glow of the hearth.

A foreign element, albeit he was witty and pleasant and on his best behavior; for evenings at the piano or organ were impossible subjected to the frequent interruptions of his comings and goings, and the tragedy of the Phœdra, the pathos of the Tristia were dumb oracles to their unwelcome auditor, who had a sneer for all sentiment, and expressed open contempt for those conceited old prigs the Latin poets.

Yet Rabys could talk after his own lead. Indeed, the very facility of his conversation, in which irrelevant thoughts found vent, awakened by no lightest apparent link of sequence, proved his powers of discernment to be naturally blunt at the edge. One never is so impressed with the fact that wit and judgment are rarely related as when subjected to the repartee of such an one as Rabys Holme, in which no slightest principle of order prevails; in which the ideas are light and frothy, if as bright and scintillating as the foam of a summer cataract.

The winter passed at Cheswick, and Rabys's whim outlived the most of its predecessors. He shuffled up and down the carpet to the time of Amy's gravest adagios, and almost pushed Cedric to the verge of distraction by deftly-whistled accompaniments to his best-loved sonatas. He continued his strictures on the readings, and interposed his handsome presence and chill banter between every attempt of Cedric's to revive that interchange of thought which had been wont to characterize his relations with Amy.

At first it had only amused him to play the part of interloper, but as he observed the palpable annoyance his continual presence caused Cedric, he conceived the brilliant idea of paying off by the same means what he was pleased to designate as "old scores." Consequently he changed his tactics somewhat, paid great deference to

Amy's lightest action, and insinuated a plea for sympathy, inasmuch as he was with them but not of them. Amy's solicitude rose in arms at this. "He feels his lack, poor fellow!" she said to Cedric, "and if we are cautious, we may be able to help him to some remedy for it."

And Cedric, seeing her gentle with Rabys, giving to him more consideration than even to him, casting about for means to awaken his interest, fell to making a "real misery out of a vague phantasm," and afforded Rabys some chuckles of infinite delight over his discomfiture.

The year was drawing to its close, the year that in afterlife more than one of them would revert to in thought, as birds fly to the shelter of their nests when night makes dark the clustering boughs above them. Ah, it is well we do not know when we send our loved ones from us with kisses of farewell and our prayers following them, what paths their footsteps are destined to tread; it is well we do not know, else what would life be but a long death-knell! Would we grasp the rosy fruit of the present if we could see the larvæ of sin and pollution breeding decay at its core? Would we launch our hopes, like birds in rainless atmospheres, if we could know how soon they are doomed to fall lifeless on Dead Sea shores, their plumage sullied by the black bituminous waters? In every age, in every life the old myths repeat themselves, until we are fain to believe the metamorphosis of the pagan poet holds some deeper meaning than we dream.

Rabys had laughed his most *moquer* laugh at the story of Dejanira, Hercules' wily wife, who had dipped his jacket in the gall of the wild boar, so that it might resist all shots, unwitting that the poison would enter the veins of him she loved, and more surely sap his life than winged barb or arrow. And he would never have dreamed of applying the lesson of the fable, even though he began to

reap a certain amount of pleasure from Amy's nearness, for, with the egotism peculiar to him, he was slow to discover that his weapons had been turned against him. His passion was of the very earth, earthy,—a mere pleasure of the senses, a languid delight in the beauty of her features, the whiteness of her skin, the grace and freedom of her movements,—love that was not worth the name, perhaps, but enthralling, beguiling to his ease-loving nature, and rather more to be depended upon than most of his selfish impulses.

Cedric recognized it for what it was, mere insensate emotion, gauged it exactly with his scrupulous, just perception, and felt Amy insulted by it. And to Amy, Rabys was not positively disagreeable. What woman, however young, fails to feel some slight sympathy with a pair of handsome eyes belonging to the opposite sex, that follow her every movement with very evident if languid satisfaction? He made larger demands upon her sympathy every day.

"What has Rick done that all the good things of life should gravitate his way?" he said one day, meeting her on her way home from a visit to a sick neighbor; "that is the problem I am trying to solve at present. In what is he so much more deserving than I that he should own so much more?"

And Amy, knowing nothing of his escapade at school, forming no other estimate of his character than as its different phases were revealed to her though her own daily experiences, commiserated with his mood, although she taxed him with its ingratitude.

"Ungrateful! perhaps I am; but the bread of charity is growing bitter in my mouth, and I don't mean to eat it much longer. Thank heaven, this tiresome year is nearly past!"

That night she said to Cedric, "Show a little sympathy with Rabys in his project for the future; he seems in a bitter, lonely mood."

Cedric's brow darkened. "You set me a vain task," he said; "Rabys would not believe in the sincerity of my motives. Has he confided to you his choice of a vocation?"

"No," and Amy sighed. "He has an overplus of energy if he will but worthily bestow it."

"Few of us do that, as witness the number of failures on record. The great difference with men, the great and the insignificant, according to Goethe, is energy; invincible determination wins the victory, he says."

"And you believe that?"

"With all my heart! I believe that with inflexible purpose, an honest heart, and strong hands obstacles may not only be surmounted but made to become the stepping-stones to ultimate success!"

His eyes flashed as he spoke. It was the creed of untried, high-hearted youth. So might Angelo have declared when those mighty marbles, fresh from the quarries of Carrara, were laid at his feet, and he was bidden carve upon them an imperishable record that might preserve through all ages the fame of the Medici and the matchless cunning of his own hand. How was he to conceive in his proud and gracious manhood, smiled upon by prince and prelate, of the years that awaited him wherein heart-hunger and exile were to be the only price of his toil, of the day when, amid the brazen streets of the city he loved, he was to bring forth with mighty throes of shame and indignation a David worthy his skill from the huge, ill-proportioned mass already misshapen by an inferior hand?

"How brave you are!" she said. "Between you and

Rabys I am, as Plato said of his will, between the two wild horses of earth and heaven, now dragged down and again lifted upward. Rabys pulls me to earth, the very nether earth,—he is my body,—while you, ah, I am led always to strive after better and higher things by you!"

"It is an ominous simile, Amy," he said. "I would not have Rabys become necessary to you."

"Oh, there the simile ends," she said, the laughter leaving her lips; "for, though I 'gave my body to be burned,' my soul must live alway."

CHAPTER IX.

A LANDMARK.

"The choice perplexes; wherefore should we choose?"
THOMSON'S *Summer*.

"OUR probation ends to-day, Amy."

"And you have chosen?" the question was asked breathlessly. She was eager to fasten the spurs on her young knight's heels and send him out to the lists of the world.

"You may not call it a choice, but I have come to a conclusion." And somehow he hesitated, for her eyes were very bright and eager, and he disliked to admit even to himself that his conclusion might occasion her some pang of disappointment, inasmuch as she rated his capacities so highly.

"I am not going from home at all. My father has more land than he can manage, and I have always preferred a country life to any other."

There was no mistaking the blank expression of dismay on her face.

"Well, Amy?"

"The position would be a sinecure, Cedric," she said, gently, but very firmly, "and the last thing I should have expected of you. You have some ulterior motive, I am sure; it cannot be the life that you would choose from all others."

He turned his eyes away, flushing a little. The truth is he was loath to give up his fair idyl, and he was foolish enough to think that it would endure. What more natural

than that he should elect to spend his life doing good in the home of his youth, with Amy always at his side to encourage and delight him? What need to break up the harmony of this ideal life which their love and congeniality had created about them, and to take her where the encroaching customs of the world would be forever intruding to separate and distract them? He was aware of the alloy of selfishness in his plan; far too keen-sighted was Cedric not to understand the quick responsive emotion that leaped to Amy's face and made it a power of reproof to him.

"Why, Cedric," she cried at last, waiting vainly for his usual ready defence of the question under discussion, "what can have come over you? Only yesterday you were triumphing over imaginary obstacles and planting for yourself a standard that but few can ever dare hope to attain; to-day you are content to throw all your possibilities away and degenerate into the mere country gentleman, seeking your highest pleasures in the chase, and finding your capabilities limited by the merest trick of wind or weather. I cannot understand it all; there is surely something behind it."

"There is something surely *beside* it, darling!" he cried, charmed out of reason by her flashing eyes and the indignant beauty of her face. He had never called her so before, and now he repeated it, "My darling!" throwing his arms about her with a glad boyish laugh. "I cannot leave you, I will not, and I do not mean to put a stop to our delightful days here. You are content to be with me always, are you not, little cousin? You have learned to love me in this year that we have lived together?"

But Amy, silly little thing, was so altogether overwhelmed that she could not keep the tears back.

"I think you must have discovered my secret before I did myself," she said, when she could control her voice; "but how could I help it? You were so good and so kind, and I was so lonely——"

"And what would have become of me had you succeeded in helping it, you absurd little thing! for I am not at all convinced that 'men have died and worms have eaten them, but *not* for love.'"

"*You* would never die for love, Cedric," shaking her head. "I think the lack of it perhaps might afford you that stepping-stone that you seem to need for ultimate success. Indeed, indeed, you must not bury your prospects here, less than ever now that I know *all*," with a pretty blush and smile, very sweet and deprecating.

But he shook his head, and the resoluteness of the movement filled her with dismay.

"It would not result well for you, Cedric. We would have you echoing Cowper's sentiment in no time,—

> "'Prospects, however lovely, may be seen
> Till half their beauties fade.'

And your father surely will be disappointed, Cedric."

"I think not," said Cedric, having no means of knowing the hopes that his father had based upon his talents and his calm, superior way of surmounting difficulties.

"He is eminently fitted for a career in the world, and he shall not fail if means and influence can aid him," thought his father when the two youths, his son and ward, stood together before his library table that fair June day that was to end their year of probation. And he was grievously disappointed when Cedric announced his decision. It eked out in the tones of his voice, in the lines that straightway puckered his forehead; but as he had offered him freedom to choose he did not remon-

strate. After all, it was very necessary that his son, the heir-presumptive of Cheswick and its outlying farms, should become early acquainted with the duties pertaining to his estates, and relieve him in his advanced age of the cares appertaining to a large landed property.

So it was settled,—Rabys for the law, and Rick to uphold the honors and emoluments of Cheswick.

"He will be the great man of the county," mused the father, taking more and more comfort in the thought that his son had chosen to live his life at home. "And some day he will marry, perhaps, and keep up the name as well as the lands of Cheswick. Lucky young dog! I don't know where he'd find a more indulgent father," which last he applied as a sort of soothing salve to the consciousness awakening slowly within him.

Well, there remains little more to be told of that summer. Rabys, observing more than his wont of what was passing before him, led thereto by the light of his own suspicious fears, became every day more openly insolent and overbearing. He began the study of law with a retired judge of the district, so that his home still remained at Cheswick, and Amy found him more than ever the wild horse of Plato's metaphor, drawing her soul earthward. And more distressing to the girl than any annoyance his nearness created was the vaguely-hinted revelation he made to her in these days of the state of his feelings toward her. The time had passed when Rabys's handsome eyes following her every movement with half-veiled delight had power to rouse her vanity. She read his character more clearly now that she was growing into womanhood so rapidly herself, for she had made wide strides in experience since that day when Cedric had surprised her with his boyish caress and avowal of love. Wayward, impulsive, unprincipled she knew him now to be,—a

human *ignis fatuus*, leading with its dazzling light to the very edge of a precipice,—a young Buffon, looking ever at the worst side of humanity, finding his chief pleasure always in the "*chronique scandaleuse*" which even Cheswick's nearest village afforded.

At last came the finale whereof you know. Cedric, meeting him one day flushed with liquor in the public room at the village, very unwisely ventured to remonstrate and coerce him into returning to Cheswick with him.

"See here!" he cried in his drunken fury, drawing the attention of the bar-room loungers to his foster-brother, "there stands a Fellow of Yale, who, for the sake of a girl, a little country chit not seventeen, means to stay at home all his life and live in 'vain inglorious ease.' Hurrah for Amy Randolph! I'll bet you ten to one, fellows, that my chances are even with his; what say you?"

I think if ever a demon entered Cedric's soul it was then. Not even in that last scene in Cheswick wood, when he smote the breath out of Rabys Holme's craven body, was murder so near being in his heart. Amy, that pure little angel at home, dreaming her sweet, girlish idyls, making the hearthstone of his lonely home a sacred spot to him, Amy, whom he had enshrined in the very penetralia of his being, to be jeered at among a set of half-drunken rowdies, his love for her exposed to their ridicule, as though it were a mere worthless rag! You know the sequel following upon such a simple train of events. Ah, well, little things make the mass, after all; little words dropping from our lips in a careless moment, little links forming one after another the chain of our existence, until we look back and behold a great bridge spanning past and present, and we may feel ourselves secure or insecure upon it only as we have built it.

CHAPTER X.

IN HIDING.

"A sinful man, and unconfessed,
* * * * * *
He, slumbering, saw the vision high
He might not view with open eyes."
Search of the Holy Grail.

"THERE is a town to those that dwell therein well known." This town well known to the inhabitants, as that particular one whereof Butler writes, is a local habitation, although it need bear no name to you, dear reader. About a mile to the northwest lie the populous copper-mines, which give importance and prosperity to the village and afford an abundant field for honest laborers in the vicinity. The mines were owned by a wealthy English company, and at the time whereof I write all its operations were in full swing. Under the cold January skies the grounds looked dreary and uninviting, though the tramways were rumbling day and night to the ceaseless echo of the cars, and at the washers the deposits came out by bushels, glittering with fine prismatic colors in the cold winter sunlight.

On a clearing in the heart of a noble forest stood the buildings of the mining company. First in rank was the "captain's house," rather pretentious with a wing and porticoes; next came the commissary building, with its long platform and three or four small rooms for lodgers attached; then the eating lodge, a two-storied rude log

building, with "bunks" in the upper story for "the men;" next the rude shanties of the mining craft who had families to provide for, and lastly on the outskirts of the clearing a very obtrusive white-pine Gothic building, wherein the Church of England service was read every Sabbath.

The great engine at the pump throbbed ceaselessly night and day; the huge pipe dripped, dripped; the water trickled away in a hundred little rills, frozen black a foot from the tanks. The great weighted boxes vibrated—now up, now down—like a gigantic scale of justice, only that the blind goddess never held the balance so evenly. Beyond were the machinery-rooms, where the wheels turned ceaselessly, the pistons worked, the hammers jumped in the vast sieves, until the brain whirled in contemplation of this iron metaphor of destiny, that, never hasting, never resting, bore all the while a purpose so inexorable, so unfaltering. And still beyond, on the very edge of the clearing, there lay long low mountains of what the miners called "skiffins," quartz-gravels of different grades, the refuse from the washers and grinders, varying in kind from the pebbles with which the dirty little denizens played "jacks" and "hull-gull" to the fine powdery sand which the housewives used in polishing their floors and tables.

White and dazzling stretched these long, uneven hills in the winter sunlight, blockading the view from the captain's house and lightening the landscape on dark winter days.

In summer, when the naked arms of the trees were leafy and alive with the wingy fluttering of birds, when the rills from the pump sparkled in the flickering sunlight, when the men sung at their work above ground, and the pretty village girls came out for Sunday walks with their lovers, it was picturesque and interesting as any practical work-day scene can ever be; but now, with the streams all

black and frozen, with the smoke from the engine hanging gloomy and black over the circle of shabby houses, it looked dispiriting and dreary in the extreme.

The dark was coming on fast and the night-gang was making ready to relieve the laborers in the shaft. In the captain's house a light twinkled like a fixed star above the very edge of the "skiffins'" bombardment. From the open door of the eating lodge the mistress called querulously after her oldest girl, gone shivering to the pump with the tea-kettle. At the lowest pile of the "skiffins" a man halted with a loaded cart, and, backing his horse up to the edge, with a dexterous tilt of the cart sent the powdery, sand-like substance out on the mound with a soft grating sound, then proceeded to unharness the tired horse preparatory to giving him his night-feed. The light from the open lodge-door shone full upon him, —a tall, firmly-knit fellow, with hair growing close and thick over his face from ear to chin,—a workman in a working-man's guise, but in the eyes beneath the shadow of the hat, in the hands, ungloved now and busied with the gear, there was much that contradicted his position, a curious evidence of unfitness for his work. Captain Hollis, on his way to supper and his young wife in the porticoed building beyond, stopped and took his cigar from between his teeth.

"How careful you are of that old horse, Chester!" he said pleasantly.

"I had a horse of my own once, a brave old fellow!" with a curious suppressed cadence in his voice that escaped the captain, who had only an ear for palpable sounds.

"Yes, and that makes you tender to his kind. Will you go with the men to the village to-night?"

Chester looked up inquiringly.

"There is a fair in the town hall, you know; most of them consider it great fun."

Swift anger lightened the subordinate's eyes. "I to the village fair!" he began, but as suddenly the anger died down, and he touched his hat respectfully, waiting to hear his captain's orders.

"Man alive! you're a queer fellow, Chester," cried the good-natured superior; "come over after supper, I have business with you." And he walked off in the growing darkness, vainly puffing at his cigar that had gone out in the frosty air.

The subordinate picked up his gloves and went off with his horse to the stables. He pushed his hat back from his face, sighing wearily. His limbs ached; the fine powdery dust had got into his throat and eyes and made them smart and burn; his head was heavy with fatigue, and in the darkness he heard the slow even throbs of the engine, the quick, sharp thumps of the hammers; and beyond this circle of noise and dinginess and discomfort lay the dark shadows of the leafless forest.

"Are ye sick, mon?" asked one of the men at the stable, observing, dolt as he was, the strained, baffled expression in the young man's eyes. "Tired mebbe, eh? supper'll set you up. The missis's got some prime baked beans, I smell 'em off here."

After the lodging-house supper,—bacon and fried mush, flanked by the "prime baked beans" aforesaid,—Chester took his hat down from its peg, and made his way across the "skiffins" to the captain's house. His wife withdrew at the entrance of one of the men.

"Sit down, Chester; what's the hurry? Well, my business is soon told. I want to get a check for a large amount cashed in the Huntsville bank," leaning forward and speaking in a confidential tone. "Inskip will be busy

for several days yet with the books, and the day supervisor has his hands about full. It will be a small matter to fill your post, so you're my man for the job."

But Chester's brow flushed, and as much of his cheeks as were above the encroaching beard. "Have you considered the matter well, captain?" he said. "Do you think it safe to trust a stranger with a large amount of cash? Are you quite sure I shall have no temptation to make away with it, or that my prospects are so fair as to preclude the possibility of any such temptation presenting itself."

His back was turned to the flickering light of the hearth, he stood in the shadow. The captain could not determine whether he spoke in earnest or in jest.

"What squeamish nonsense, man! I tell you, your voice, your manner are so many letters of credit. I shouldn't fear to trust you to the end of the world."

And the captain, who spoke out of the kindness and unsuspicion of his own sound nature, was not prepared for the fervor with which his subordinate wrung his hand, nor for the glowing gratitude stamped on every feature of his face when at last he turned to the light.

"Thank you, captain, for your trust, it is sweeter than you dream," said this peculiar young man in tones so husky from emotion that the captain's young wife, who had been an auditor to the colloquy, though unseen, ventured to peep very cautiously through her chamber-door opening into the parlor.

Such a figure as that wearing a workman's blouse! such hands as those—slender, supple, betokening the nervous strength of the scholar—condemned to shovel at the refuse piles day after day for a bare subsistence! And on the proud, high-bred features was stamped such an ex-

pression of unrest that, added to her curiosity, she experienced a pang of genuine womanly solicitude.

"I gave you the lightest job on the ground," her husband was saying, "and yet you're growing thinner every day. You are not equal to the exposure and all that."

Chester laughed drearily, but he volunteered no other reply, as he stood before his employer, his eyes luminous with some strange emotion. "It is not that; I have been inured to endurance," he said.

And he spoke but the truth, for in days that were past he had executed gymnastic feats that had had the effect to knit his muscles into steel, and he had tested the power of every trick of wind and weather in that exhilarating sport that has enlisted the hearts of men since the days when Nimrod was a mighty hunter before the Lord. He was inured to endurance by the superb training to which he had been subjected. But this dual task, this Sisyphus-like labor of the mind, this travail of fruitless effort to expiate for a single rash and weighty deed, for this his experience furnished him no parallel. He could interpose no power of mind or body to resist such an influence.

The captain followed him out upon the portico: "Of course, Chester, you'll not mention your errand. You don't club enough with the men to be popular among them, and they might see fit to resent my choice of an emissary. We make a small microcosm here, Chester, and the riff-raff is an inevitable ingredient you know."

The captain returned to his parlor in a very complacent mood. "Some comfort in talking to a fellow like that," he said to his wife, who had resumed her seat in front of the hearth; "one grows terribly rusted in a heathenish place like this. I shall have Chester over, if you don't mind; he is a gentleman, one can see that at a glance."

But Mrs. Hollis, being a shrewd and calculating little

woman, was, as a natural concomitant, suspicious. "If, on the other hand, he is a villain, you have offered him a splendid chance, my dear," she said, with a sapient nod of her small head.

Chester walked on to his room at the lodge, a tiny dormitory of rough boards, with a hard, clean bed, a small wash-stand, and a chair. He hung his hat on a nail, and drawing the single chair up near the stand, sat down and leaned his arms upon it, supporting his head between his hands. It was bitterly cold, his breath curled like vapor about his head, but he preferred this chilly solitude to the noise and riot of the dining-room below, where the fumes of tobacco and beer reeked in the close atmosphere. Here at least it was quiet and clean. For a long time he sat looking into space with dreary, wide-opened eyes,—a long time, while the winter night grew colder, and the miners' voices came noisily up to him as a door was opened or shut between them. At length, stirred by the cold that seemed penetrating to his very heart, he thrust his hand, aching and partially benumbed, in the breast of his blouse. In an instant his eyes lost their strained, weary stare, his face from its apathy quivered and broke into warmth, and he drew into the light a shining, gleaming thing, and looked at it with a rush of tears blinding his eyes. Was it an amulet holding some magic, mysterious power by which that stern, haggard young face was so suddenly softened? Only a ring, but he held it as dying hands hold those that have life and warmth in them. A magic power it owned, indeed, for as he held it he seemed also to hold all the beauty and promise that his own life had once owned; it brought back to him soft, thrilling tones, innocent, sweet glances, the sacredness of love, the balm of sympathy,—a cameo bearing the figure of a woman with wings, and in her hands a helm and a wheel.

"Ah, that I could have forgotten!" he cried under his breath in the silence of the miserable chamber, with the winter cold striking like death to his very heart, and he hastily hid the ring in his bosom, and, flinging off his uncouth garments, got into bed, shivering with more than bodily cold, a very coward before the memory that rushed back into his brain. Nemesis became angel-guide or avenger just as a man's actions decided. Of what avail was it that he had chosen to bury himself in this dark Northern forest, where there were none to suspect, none to watch him? Nemesis, the avenger, held inviolate sway over sea and land alike. It made no part of his misery that he, who had been reared in the softness of luxury, who had known

> "the luscious sweets of plenty,
> Every night had slept with soft content about his head,
> And never waked but to a joyful morning,"

was reduced to the common wants of the laborer who must earn his meal by the sweat of his brow before he ate it; that, still weak from illness, he was overtaxing his physical powers to such an extent as threatened disability, if not to-day, very soon in the near future. He was willing to suffer in the body; he felt a stoical sense of justice in the aches and pains that assailed his hitherto untired limbs. He would gladly have taken upon himself any work of penance could he have believed in its efficacy to atone for past sins. He would, like St. Britius of old, have endured the ordeal of the burning coals to have proven his innocence of sin in thought, in heart, when he yielded to the temptation of the first brother and was stamped like him with a brand that even God's mercy would never wipe off. But his heart, so long denied its natural aliment, only just begun to feel the awakening influences of love and con-

geniality, his heart, hungry, rebellious, lonely, cried out with fierce, importunate cries that would not be stilled.

He had forsworn the world that he might not suffer a separation from the dearest joys of his life. With his own hand he had erected an invincible barrier between himself and their influences. He had sacrificed all the prospects of his opening manhood upon the altar of his own selfish inclinations; he had not been guided by father or friends in this reckless pursuance of what he had chosen to consider his highest earthly good, and the result was what it too often is when we dare to say, as did Canute, "come hither" to the waves, or "roll yonder at my bidding." Methinks He who sits aloft and marks the destinies of the nations allows us to try our petty strength ofttimes against His own, only that we may come to know and understand its puerility in the end.

Thus his reveries were wont to end, in conceding to his merciless perception of what was true and just the verdict which his heart refused to sanction; for his heart, lonely, sin-burdened, cried out unceasingly, "How shall I live? how shall I bear this weight of anguish?" After awhile, when the lights were out in the long dining-room and the miners had all sought their homes, sleep came to him; such sleep as came to the Ancient Mariner when, in the midst of Polar ice and snow, with those lank corpses all about him, he dreamed of the kirk-yard and the moon shining on the familiar waters of the bay that lapped the shores of his own dear land.

From the dreariness and desolation of the present he had escaped to the affluence of the past. But, like poor Soui-hong when he dreamed of Pu stirring the water with her slender lacquered wand, the cold moonlight divided him from the love he so longed for, divided and "lay between them like the sword of the cherub!"

CHAPTER XI.

SANS PEUR!

"Though weak with pain he plunges in,
And to the hillock's brow
Is come; they wondered much before,
But more they wonder now."

Ballads from English History.

CHESTER presented himself at the captain's parlor-door next morning at the appointed hour. Mrs. Hollis, at the pretty breakfast-table, regarded him stealthily, not knowing that those eyes, preternaturally large and hollow, were taking in with one hungry glance the whole aspect of the pretty little room, with its comfortable adjuncts and cosy, home-like atmosphere.

She surveyed him keenly as he stood there in his ill-fitting suit of coarse gray cloth, his hat in his gloved hands, his comforter well bundled about his neck, and, even more distinctly than on the night preceding, observed those unmistakable contradictions in his appearance to his position that had struck with more or less force every single individual with whom he had been thrown in contact at the mines. There was a nameless, delicate air of refinement about the man that betrayed him.

He caught the shrewd though cautious scrutiny of those keen bright eyes and shifted his position uneasily, and she, being a truly kind-hearted creature, commiserating his confusion, smiled pleasantly and invited him to take some hot

coffee before he set out on his bleak ride. This courtesy he refused with a grace and ease of manner that argued him no stranger to the habits of polite society, and, after receiving the captain's last orders and some cautionary directions, went out from the lady's presence.

"You won't tarry, Chester?" was the captain's parting injunction from the portico. "I positively must have that money before the evening mail is closed."

Chester promised, vaulting lightly upon the captain's horse standing ready for him beyond the gate. "By the middle of the afternoon I will surely be here, depend upon it," and he struck into a swift canter down the frozen road that led to the pike.

"I'd wager my life he's a Southerner by the way he rides!" exclaimed the captain, resuming his seat at the table and allowing his wife to refill his plate with all sorts of steaming edibles. "Poor fellow! poor fellow! what can have brought him here?"

"How much sympathy you waste, Hugh!" laughed his wife. "Doubtless the fellow is in hiding; we have plenty of that sort here, I have heard you say so. Do drink your coffee, it is growing cold again, and I have no more to offer you. If he comes back with that money, it will be more than I would dare prophesy."

In happy ignorance of the captain's wife's suspicions Chester pursued his way. It was bitterly cold, the heavens of that fine clear gray when the weatherwise predict "we shall have snow when it moderates." The leafless trees along the pike swirled their naked boughs wildly in the sudden gales, whistling shrilly for a few seconds then sinking to quiet again,—a dreary, hopeless day, in tune with the traveller's mood; no light in the heavens, no beauty on the earth, no comfort in the monotonous reach of moorland or the barren range of hills that stretched

to right and left of him. It is with the heart that we see rather than with the eye, after all, for he remembered when just such gray, ice-cold days as this one held infinite resources of enjoyment for him; when the winds whistling fiercely without, the gray clouds, the bleak winter view had served but to heighten by contrast the delicious indoor warmth and harmony. Ah, surely if "memory of things precious makes warm the hearts that hold them," then ought his to have glowed forever.

But, ah, it is not so; not often. Human hearts, the noblest of them, are too selfish in their pain. We who have held the rich prizes of life in our hands, and have suffered their loss, may cherish warmly in our hearts the belief that such prizes exist somewhere, if lost to us, but memory becomes a haunting regret, and regret, no matter how vague, is chilling and blighting as a first frost to late blooms. His memory had become a keen regret to him, and so it brought no warmth to his heart.

He did not tarry in Huntsville when his business was once accomplished. Resuming his homeward track, his mind also resumed its gloomy train of thought. He rode slowly, with slack rein, the captain's money in his bosom. And step by step, with the horse's pace, he reviewed the ground that had led him to his present path. He could see now, as he would not allow himself to do then, the flaw in his plan, the root of self-love at the bottom of it, the weak pandering to that fastidiousness which demanded constantly its highest meed in the perfect sympathy of thought and feeling which *she*, and she alone, had ever given him. Well, his plan had failed; the admirable, altogether worthy plan that he had conceived of sacrificing her youth, her intellect, her rare young charms to the Juggernaut of his inordinate exactions.

You may judge of his increasing morbidness by his

growing tendency to distort the facts of the case; and yet, surely, he was almost justified when we consider his peculiar suffering, for

> "An orphan's curse would drag to hell
> A spirit from on high;
> But, oh, more horrible than that
> Is the curse in a dead man's eye!"

Better to have stayed where the evidence of his crime might have convicted him at once than live to feel all expiations useless. He threw up his arm with a great cry in the lonely road, whereat his horse stopped, uttering a low neigh of terror. This brought him to his senses; he gathered the slack reins in a firm grasp and started off at a brisk trot.

The winter day was darkening rapidly, and in front of him a dense clump of woodland threw shadows black as night upon the road. He must move on more rapidly or the evening mail would surely be closed before the captain got his money. While yet the thought was in his mind a strange thing occurred. Selim, the captain's horse, spirited, though gentle as a lamb, came to a complete stand-still, immovable as the statue of a horse; his ears pointed, his nostrils dilating, his forefeet planted firmly, indicating in every line of his powerful form fear and determination combined. It was in vain that Chester coaxed, soothed, threatened, and at last had recourse to the whip. Selim stood like a horse in a picture, his quivering nostrils and flashing eyes affording the sole indications of life about him. At length he dismounted, thinking to lead him past the fancied danger, when, in the twinkling of an eye, he felt himself caught in a powerful grasp from behind, and the horse, with a shrill scream of defiance and terror, broke from

his hold and set off at a mad gallop down the road. With one powerful effort Chester wrenched his right arm free and grappled with his foe face to face. He knew him on the instant for O'Reilly, a saturnine, dark-visaged Irishman, one of the underground workers in the night-gang. For a moment his heart failed him; the Irishman had the strength of the lion in those big brawny arms, and he fought and strained in their cruel embrace with the desperation of a madman.

"Begorra, I don't want to kill ye at all, at all! It's the money I want, ye white-faced young fool!" cried the ruffian, relaxing his hold, and Chester, availing himself of that brief respite, made a plunge for the pistol the captain had thrust into his bosom at leaving; but the Irishman, with a volley of oaths, knocked it out of his hand before he had time to cock it, and caught him afresh in his deadly embrace. This time he knew it to be but a matter of seconds which should win; those brawny blackened arms were closing like a vice about his chest, and, weakened by illness and despair, he must soon succumb.

Death! It had come in answer to his prayer; and when life held nothing for him but misery and exile, why should it suddenly become so precious unto him? He fought with the frenzy of a tiger, straining, biting, and tearing like a wild thing for the life that had seemed so barren at noon.

His arms were failing; the blood began to rush in mad surging waves against the drums of his ears; a hundred pulses were beating in his temples; slowly, mercilessly in that black, brutal clasp the life was being pressed out of his veins, when, oh, blessed sound of wheels bowling down the quiet road! oh, heavenly tones of human voices vibrating on the icy air! nearer, nearer, until, as in a dream, Chester felt the vice-like grasp relax, and himself

flung out into the road, simultaneous with a blinding flash in his dazed and bewildered eyes and a benumbing, crashing pain that darted along his left arm; flung almost under the wheels of the wagon bowling rapidly down the darkening road. It stopped at his side; he heard voices, saw strange faces, and realized that they were conveying him to the wagon. It all seemed a dream in his state of exhaustion, that slow drive down the white road, with the black heavens above and the strange voices in his ear; a dream the torch-like light that flitted like a will-o'-the-wisp, and grew and grew until it stopped right in front of them,—in reality the lamp-post of the country inn, whose wagon had brought him to its hospitable shelter,—and, last of all, a silent procession, in which he found himself faintly puzzled to understand why all those alien eyes were so persistently turned upon him.

CHAPTER XII.

"FIDELIS AD URNAM!"

"Yet life I hold but idle breath
When love or honor's weighed with death."
Lady of the Lake.

AT the mines the evening was far advanced, and the snow was falling, covering the frozen rills, the weights, the "skiffins," the pretentious roof of the captain's house, and the lean-to of the shanties with the same white mantle of beauty and softness, like God's dear bounties that come to us all, whether we deserve them or not.

Captain Hollis had just completed a tour of the grounds with the day supervisor, and stood now at the edge of the gravel-hills, nervously consulting his watch and glancing up the road that Chester had taken in the morning. It was long past the hour that he should have been back. What could be keeping the fellow? The captain had been more than human not to have felt uneasy, obliged as he had been to listen to his wife's speculations concerning the chances of Chester's return; but it is only doing him justice to add that it was a very faint doubt as yet, and an unwelcome one, as was evidenced by the quick gleam of relief upon his features at the sound of distant horse-hoofs ringing down the frozen road.

"Heavens, how the fellow rides!" he ejaculated, as the sound advanced. But the horse swung round the curve of the wood at a thundering gallop, riderless, with the empty stirrups clanging noisily against his sides!

"Well, my dear, you would not listen to me," said the captain's wife, when her husband burst into the parlor half wild with excitement and dismay. "To send a stranger like *that* on *such* an errand! What *could* you expect?"

"Something has happened to him, I'd be willing to swear; and I tell you what it is, Milly, you'd rather see me humbugged ten times over than risk the chance of your prediction's failing."

"How silly you are, my dear!" Milly's voice was positively angelic. "I really think it is very hard on you that you should have to pay so dearly for your credulity," enjoying not a little her evident advantage over her twelvemonth lord, the more that he was given to airing his authority on certain occasions. "I only hope you'll not have to settle with the company for Chester's delinquencies," with which last little thrust Mrs. Milly turned to her crocheting and sorted colors as indifferently as though no such person as Chester existed and large checks were to be cashed every day for the depositors.

"Great Heavens! are there no honest men?" cried the captain, nettled with anger, and a little dubious also as to the defence he should be able to make for his imprudence, should things occur according to Milly's prophecy and Chester not return. "Selim may have slipped the bridle and come home; in that case he will walk from Huntsville, and we will see him here by seven or eight at the farthest."

But it was a forlorn hope at best, and when at last ten o'clock struck and the lights were out all over the grounds, even that was relinquished.

"Well, it is all my own fault," said this generous, whole-hearted man. "He warned me that I had no warrant to trust him, and he never meant to betray me. If

you could have seen his face when he accepted the job you would know that, Milly. As for the company, I can settle it with them; but for him, poor fellow, I put the temptation and opportunity in his way, and they were too much for him, too much for him, and I shall never forgive myself."

After all, the true test of generous emotion is the readiness with which it responds to a demand made upon it. A man may feel in his heart a sudden glow of generosity, but stifle its expression in a corresponding deed, and that is like listening to an exquisite strain of music, feeling the soul expand under its harmonizing influence, while the body sits silent, giving no evidence of the perception it enjoys.

When the Yorick of Sterne's reminiscences shakes his purse aloft as though eager to share it with the world, his generous ardor receives an instant check in the mendicant whine of the Franciscan monk at his shoulder, who is fain to stand by and see the precious purse safely lodged in its owner's bosom, and himself supplied instead with an extensive homily upon the wants and miseries of the world at large.

But in the captain's breast generosity was not only an emotion to be experienced, but one to be expressed. It was easy to say in the morning, looking into his subordinate's honest-seeming eyes and reading truth therein, if ever he read it in human features, "I believe in your honesty;" but to-night, with Selim come home riderless, with appearances entirely against him, it was not so easy, perhaps, to believe it, though he did, as you have seen, and, moreover, attached the greater burden of culpable error to his own shoulders, inasmuch as he had been the tempter.

His rest was broken that night. He awoke near dawn with a strange sound in his ears, the sound of Chester's

voice calling faintly, "Captain! Captain Hollis!" Well, it was very natural that, under the circumstances, he should dream about the fellow.

"Captain! Captain!"

This was no continuation of his dreams. He was fairly awake now, and sprang out of bed in a trice, crossed the little parlor in two or three strides, and darted out into the hall. He flung open the door in a fever of suspense, and there on the portico, looking shadowy as a ghost in the glimmering dawn, stood Chester.

"Is it you? Is it you?" grasping his hand and pulling him into the hall; "thank God, my boy!" He struck a light in the little parlor and turned to him for an explanation of his strange delay, but at sight of him he could only exclaim with dismay.

Milly, aroused by the ejaculations, thrust her bare feet into a pair of slippers and crept to the parlor door. There was Chester lying back in her own easy-chair, where yesterday she had uttered her nonchalant prophecies concerning him, his lips blue and shaking, his eyes glazed and strained as though rallying by one supreme effort the forces of his will, lest the mists of delirium should blot out all the familiar outlines about him, his left arm hanging limp and nerveless by his side. She went back and dressed hurriedly, her womanly instincts thoroughly aroused.

He told his story from the beginning to the end, with frequent pauses, his lips shaking more and more as he concluded, the mists creeping gradually up over the tired blue eyes.

"Here it is, captain, the money," searching his breast, smiling the while unsteadily, and bringing to light the package of bills in their brown paper wrapper. "They would have brought me, they said, if I would wait till

daylight; but I could not, I had lost enough time as it was, and I knew what you would be thinking, and—and —*I could not bear that!*"

"Milly! Milly!" roared the captain, and Milly, dressed in the nick of time, rushed in. "See," cried he, great tears running down his honest face, "see, he is brave as a lion and true as steel, and I believe he has killed himself in his haste to vindicate his honor!"

And at the sight of that still, senseless face, so young and yet so worn, Milly lost all suspicion, all pique, and all womanly zeal for the safety of her prediction.

CHAPTER XIII.

"JOCELIN OF BRAKELAND."

"He smiled as men smile when they will not speak,
Because of something bitter in the thought."
"Get leave to work
In this world, 'tis the best you get at all."
Aurora Leigh.

THERE was but one theme at the mines next day, despite its being the Sabbath and the fact that the rector of a distant parish was to hold service in the little pine structure on the edge of the clearing. Chester's errand, Chester's escape, Chester's bravery were in every mouth. One remembered that he had met O'Rielly coming from behind the "skiffins," near the captain's portico, at a late hour on Friday night; several testified to having remarked upon his absence when the night-gang came down the shaft to relieve the day-workers; the day supervisor affirmed that he had exempted him from duty on the plea of sudden sickness, and very certain it was that he had been absent from the grounds since noon the day before.

Chester was the hero of the hour. "He showed plenty of grit, for all his white hands and uppish ways," said one of the roughest of the men, and the tide turned in his favor steadily.

Little recked Chester of what was going on in that microcosm, as the captain had called it, outside the little parlor, where he lay on an improvised couch, with the village doctor feeling his pulse and regarding gravely those

ominous red spots on his cheeks above the short thick beard.

The long day passed in utter unconsciousness for him, wandering in the mazes of disordered feverish dreams, with no single ray of reason shining in his glittering restless eyes. Milly's own, keen and watchful as ever, grew dim as they fathomed some of the secrets he had so closely guarded.

"How he keeps searching about his breast as though he had lost something; look, dear," she said to her husband as he entered the parlor after an absence of a few moments.

"He is thinking of the money, poor fellow!" murmured the captain, bending over him and pushing the falling locks back from his temples. "Chester, my poor lad, don't you know me?"

But Chester gave no heed, only continued to fumble about his breast with his right hand, breathing the short labored breaths of pain and fever.

"Do you think he could be hurt there, Hugh? some wound that the doctor did not discover?" suggested Milly.

Whereupon the captain subjected him to a thorough examination. It was not a wound he found, but a ring hung about his neck by a silken guard, and they looked at each other wonderingly when, conveying it to his feebly wandering fingers, he clasped it eagerly, and in his vacant restless eyes a dreamy expression of content dawned. "Amy! Amy!"

"He has called her all day," whispered Milly; "just Amy, all the time. Oh, if we knew where to find her, Hugh, and it is *her* ring he hides!"

* * * * * * * * *

A serious time Chester had of it for days, while his

fever ran high and the doctor talked gravely of gangrene, looking at the great red jagged wound in his left arm,—a serious time, but, aided by his strong and vigorous constitution, and nursed constantly by the captain's wife in her own little parlor, from whence they had never attempted to remove him, slowly Chester came round again, very slowly and feebly, for the strain upon his powers, both physical and mental, had been long and severe, and nature was demanding a penalty for his disregard of some of her most stringent exactions. The keen black eyes of the captain's wife, which he had once dreaded to encounter, and which even now aroused in him a vague suspicion that they were piercing some of his disguises, were ever vigilant where his comfort was concerned, and unfailing to detect the first signs of approaching fatigue or unrest, and with her ever kind and ready hands prompt in administering the remedy, she won his gratitude long before he gave her his confidence.

As Chester grew stronger it became a pleasure to him to watch her flitting about his room. She was sharp and self-assertive, but very fresh and pretty, by right of her royal dower of youth and happiness, and he did not pause to consider that the sharpness might degenerate into acidity, the self-assertiveness into shrewishness, with the years; while her husband, to whom she was genuinely devoted, was of too careless and easy-going a nature to exercise the necessary restraint over her faults, so that there was nothing to hope for from his influence.

Like Jocelin of Brakeland, the genial captain of the mines was "a grown man with the heart of a good child." In all the little mining colony there was not one, man, woman, or child, in whom he did not discover some rare distinguishing trait worthy of the highest admiration, and in a quiet, unobtrusive way that you would never have

suspected, he found means of serving them each in the peculiar way best adapted to his nature, and, from the day supervisor to the humblest worker underground, all loved and respected our "Cap'n." Like most men of his mould, with a modicum of what the world calls talent, he owned a rare power of judgment and simple habit of directness that eminently fitted him for the position he held in the company's service.

He came in one evening when Chester, promoted to the dignity of pillows and an arm-chair, was looking almost like himself in the flattering glow from the hearth; came in rubbing his hands vigorously, and stamping his feet in a manner intensely suggestive of the pleasure of indoor warmth, as contrasted with the winter night outside.

"Eh, Chester, enjoying poor health? as the girl said in the Sunday-school book Milly was crying over last week. Milly is a prime little nurse, eh? Whew! but 'tis cold out, you've no idea," standing with his back to the grate and gathering the frock of his coat in front of him. "Queer lot we have here, Chester," he said, after a pause, with that benign look of satisfaction in his eyes that Chester had grown to understand and enjoy. "I stopped at the lodge on my way up to see Gough about the loads, and there was Jim, Stable Jim, you know, crying with frosted feet, and Mrs. Gough down on her knees feathering 'em with turpentine, and the potatoes frying for supper just ready to burn, so Gough said, if he hadn't gone to the rescue. Bless my soul! I don't know when I had anything to touch me so,—Gough lookin' so ashamed of helping his wife, and that old shrew mothering Stable Jim as though he'd been her own. Riff-raff and all that, you know, Chester, but touch them in the right place and there they are!" And the captain pointed with such earnestness in front of him, that one might have supposed

Gough, his wife, and Stable Jim to have been directly within the range of his vision.

"Ah, but not every one could touch them in the right place, captain; it is not given to any but the most skilled artisan to detect the joints in the armor," said Chester, looking up from his bolstering pillows with a gentle smile on his thin face. "Humanity is like the snail, I often think: prick it with the pin-points of curiosity and persistence and it resolutely withdraws into its shell, but give it the sunlight of confidence, the warmth of trust, and see how soon it comes creeping out to bask in its rays."

"True enough," and the captain dropped his coat-frock to stroke his beard complacently. Thus he stood for a while, evidently pondering some weighty thoughts, then went over to where Chester leaned among his pillows. "My lad," he said, laying his hand heavily on the sick man's shoulder, "you won't deny I've given you my confidence and trust, and I won't deny that you've paid me well for my faith in you, but I am afraid you will accuse me of pricking your snail-shell with pins if I ask you an honest question, boy."

"Ask what you please, captain," but he felt the shoulder under his hand flinch; "you have a right to ask, only you will not be displeased with me if I cannot answer."

"So you give me credit for curiosity only!" and the captain laughed his broad, good-humored laugh, while Milly, sitting at the window to catch the failing light upon her work, gathered it up and made a motion to leave the room.

"Stay, Mrs. Hollis, will you not?" pleaded Chester, whose quick eyes had caught the movement.

"Yes, stay, Milly," echoed the captain. "I have nothing to ask Chester concerning the secrets he chooses

to guard, they do not in the least concern me; what I do want to know is what he means to do in the future, if he has any prospects or any friends to whose influence he can trust. Why, boy, you don't expect to go back to work on the grounds; it was slowly killing you before, and now with that disabled arm you look like handling a shovel or loading the weights."

He turned to him almost fiercely, this gentle-hearted Jocelin, who could not bear to see a dog suffer a pang that might be allayed; for there was a dumb expression of dismay mingled with some other emotion that he could not fathom in the blue eyes of "the lad."

"And is there no work here that I *can* do?"

The captain fell to stroking his beard again, and Milly sewed on in the fading light, but it was growing too dark to see, and she pricked her fingers sadly.

"Captain," said Chester at length, sitting upright in his chair and shifting his disabled arm to an easier position; "captain, I have no friends, no plans, no prospects. I had a blind belief once in that influence men called fate, but I know now that fate in this life is but the working out of our own impulses, good or bad. In fact, I have proven myself a humbug out and out. That evening that I started on my way home from Huntsville, with your money in my breast, I told myself that my fate was an evil one, because I had commenced with succumbing to an evil impulse at the outset. I chose to follow the lead of that impulse and make it my fate. But I was far from realizing that then. Even God seemed against me. I know my mood was morbid, but I had suffered so much from the result of my error that I had lost the power of judging clearly. I told myself that I could not live. I asked God to shorten my miserable life, and on that lonely bleak road I taxed Him with injustice. Well, He showed

me then how little I knew my own heart after all, for when O'Reilly threatened my life with annihilation, I found suddenly that it was of invaluable price to me. Great heavens, how I fought, like a fiend, for life after all was dear to me! I used to prate finely of energy and determination and the surmounting of obstacles on the road to success when I owned all those vaunted advantages,—friends, influence, prospects. I will see if I am as strong to fight in the face of impossibilities as I once idly dreamed I was."

"Well, you must get some physical strength, boy, before you set to testing your powers," speaking bluffly to hide his emotions; "mean time we'll see what we can do for you here."

"You are not in a position to judge me, knowing, as you do, nothing of my life," he resumed. "I shall bear like an incubus all my days the terrible consequence of my sin; not for a moment shall I be able to shift its weight; I am doomed to perpetual exile on account of it, to a living death as far as all those are concerned whom I have known and loved." And as he spoke his face grew ghastly, and drops of moisture stood on his forehead. "But God, who sees all things, who pierces the most hidden motives, looks into my naked human heart and sees it guiltless of the intention to have committed such a crime; yes, even when I followed the impulse that led me into temptation I was ignorant as you are of what the result would be."

"I can believe that! I can believe that, my lad!" cried his simple friend.

"I have no blame to cast upon any living creature but myself," he concluded; "but I shall no longer be able to cheat myself. The life that I fought O'Reilly so wildly for must be turned to some account, if I would retain a

single morsel of respect for myself. Oh, my friends," he cried, after a moment of exhaustion, in which Milly held a draught of strong cordial to his lips and tenderly wiped the drops from his forehead with her own little embroidered handkerchief, "it is bitter to feel that there is no purification for one's sins, no atonement that will avail, either in this world or the next. It makes the travail and the toil of life seem mere thankless tasks!"

"Can he have forged a note?" whispered Milly to her husband that night.

"Forged a note!" in high indignation, echoed the gentle Jocelin; "it looks like it, a man who would risk his life to save a stranger's money entrusted to his hands!"

"Could it have been *murder* then?" in a still more subdued whisper queried the captain's undaunted wife. "What other crimes would entail such consequences as those he hinted at this evening?"

And the captain, remembering his tender care of the cart-horse, the gentle hand with which he stroked the leanest cur in the colony, felt additional anger at the suggestion. "It is queer," was his final remark to his wife, "queer as sticks!" though what particular sticks the captain meant to describe I shall have to leave to your imagination; "but, whatever it is, the poor fellow went into it blindfolded, and it seems a rank injustice for him to have to suffer the penalty."

But then, as Chester had observed, the captain was not in a position to judge.

"I'll tell you what it is, Chester," he said next day, when the invalid had finished his late breakfast and been helped into the easy-chair again, "we need a clerk at the commissary. Inskip has enough to do with the books and helping the day supervisor at his rounds. Suppose you take that for a while, old fellow, when you get strong

again; 'tisn't the pleasantest job in the world, but there is no rough hard work. And I'll tell you what, my lad, Milly and I have grown so used to you,—haven't we, Milly?—that we are loath to give you up; there's that little room above the hall, snug and tight, suppose you just call that your own and stay on with us, my boy."

Chester threw up his hand with a passionate gesture, clutching the collar at his throat as though it were choking him. "I don't deserve it," he said, in a husky voice; "I have forfeited all claim to a home, and that is what you offer. Oh, God bless you both!"

Milly escaped into her bedroom, and the captain went out the front door, stumbling over the "skiffins" by reason of the dimness of his eyesight, as if that dazzling mountain, like Aladdin's palace, had been reared in a single night.

CHAPTER XIV.

PERSEPHONE.

"Regret, Remorse, Shame; three
Hell-hounds that ever dog my
Steps and bay at my heels."
Robert Burns' Letters.

"Her looks were like a flower in May,
Her smile was like a summer morn."
ROBERT BURNS.

IT was Sunday at the mines, a beautiful June Sunday; the little rills ran sparkling from the tank, the great pipes dripped sleepily and monotonously, the gravel-hills shone white as Albion's cliffs in the sunlight, and out from the miners' shanties freshly-dressed men and women were followed by chubby-faced, laughing children on their way to afternoon service in the Gothic chapel at the edge of the wood.

Peaceful and picturesque looked the noisy work-day miners on this Sunday. The branches of the huge old trees were stirring with soft breezes, a balmy odor was afloat in the air from the wild pink honeysuckles that were blooming so profusely in the wood, and that filled every fireplace in the colony with color and fragrance. Between the woodland aisles there were to be had bewitching glimpses of pasture land and wide fields waving with the emerald green of the growing wheat.

Leaning against a mammoth oak-tree near the engine-house, with a book open upon his knee, sat the clerk of the commissary. He was not reading, his eyes were fol-

lowing the circling course of some swallows seeking quarters in the chimneys of the captain's house. The cartman, with his promotion to the post of clerk at the commissariat, had assumed some of the habits of a gentleman. Instead of the dark ill-fitting clothes, he wore a light suit of tweed, and the whiteness of his linen, the conventional set of his necktie, proclaimed him quite within the pale of gentility again. No need to adopt the guise of a workman any longer, for the colony looked up to him ungrudgingly nowadays; indeed, there had been a tacit understanding between them since that cold winter morning when, more dead than alive, he had presented himself at the captain's door with the money hidden in his breast. He had been "le chevalier sans peur et sans reproche" ever since to them.

As he sat there, following with his eyes the gyrations of the swallows above the chimneys, his thoughts flew off in a wild flight of their own. The book on his knee was a much-tattered brown volume of Ovid. He had been reading it with a faint sense of the likeness in his own to the fate of the Latin poet. His heart, always sensitive to the slightest suggestion of memory, drew a dreary comparison as he sat there with the vagrant breezes lifting his hair, and the scent of the pink honeysuckles smiting his senses. At desolate Tomi, on the wild Euxine shore, where no flowers grew, no birds ever sang, where the very sun itself shone but fitfully through the gray misty clouds, the Augustan poet had dragged his existence through long years, pining in vain for the golden skies of his beloved Italy and the familiar beauty of the garden near the Flaminian way, where in his happy youth he had loved and sung. But he pined in vain, for the recall never came; amid the pomp of the Augustan court the name of the once favored poet was never mentioned, and he

who had won their applause at the fasti, whose songs had lent a charm to the most triumphant occasions in those royal days of his prosperity, was doomed never again to see the beauty of his native land, and dying, in a desolate old age, was buried in the alien Scythian soil, afar from all he had loved so faithfully and vainly. Those plaintive appeals of the Tristia, those mournful memories, those pining barren regrets found an all too faithful echo in his own heart, himself an exile, now and forever!

But the likeness soon ended, for the poet had never deserved the misery of his exile. Condemned by a tyrant king, to suit his own ends, the poor mourner of the Tristia never knew what he had to expiate. And for him expiation was unavailing, for him there was no escape, as there had been none for Orestes when the relentless Eumenedean chorus pursued him sleeping or waking. He checked the maddening torrent of thought by a supreme effort of will, flinging his arm aloft, as of the soul within him making a mute protest against the burden that the body imposed upon it. "Foul! foul!" he groaned. "Oh, my God! what would I not give if to-day I could lift up clean hands to Thee?"

Absorbed in his bitter thoughts, his ear had taken no note of the sounds about him,—the smooth bowling of carriage-wheels down the graded road that led from the village, nor the rustling of footsteps among the last year's leaves that filled the wood-paths. So he started, letting the little brown volume of the Tristia fall to the ground, when a strange voice accosted him, and he found himself confronted by a party of people, evidently come on a Sunday tour of the grounds.

"Will you kindly introduce us to the captain?" asked the owner of the voice, a middle-aged man with a pair of keen eyes and salt-and-pepper whiskers.

Chester stooped for his hat, his heart beating rapidly. It made a part of his punishment that he should dread to find in every stranger some acquaintance of his old life.

"Captain Hollis is with his wife at service," he said; "but if you come to inspect the works I will show you around with pleasure, and it will not be long until service is over."

The gentleman accepted his offer with a polite bow, noting his embarrassment as a very natural emotion, and following him with the rest of the party into the engine-house. There, during a pause in his explanation, Chester inspected them, and drew a deep sigh of relief when he found all the faces unfamiliar.

Besides the gentleman who had spoken were two ladies, one exceedingly frail in appearance,—a young gentleman scrupulously dressed and a girl wearing a riding-habit. It was at this girl that Chester looked more than once, seeing so much that was distinctive about her that, with his usual habit of satisfying his judgment, he made a vain effort to understand in what it consisted. She intercepted his searching glance with a quick flash of those large brilliant eyes of hers. Such eyes! imperious, level lidded, and black as night. Surely they would exhaust her very life some day with the demands they made for constant light and warmth and beauty.

"Were you not reading the Tristia?" she asked, speaking to him for the first time.

The young man who was carrying her riding-whip touched her arm. She drew away from him impatiently. "Don't, Alfred," she said, with the petulant manner of a spoiled child; "you don't know how odious you are when you squint. I am reminded irresistibly of the origin of the word and its corruption nowadays. 'View of holy things' indeed! Imagine in those mediæval days the little

hole in the gallery and the reverent eyes that peeped through at the great ceremony of the sacrifice!"

"Call it by some other name then, coz; but whatever you do don't forget yourself," he answered in an undertone.

"Small fear of my doing that," she answered, with a half-sneer that made her young face very cold and unsympathetic; then she turned to the guide. "Was it the Tristia you were reading?" A flickering color came and went in her cheeks.

"It was," said Chester, standing with his hat in his hand.

"And you enjoy it?"

"No."

"Ah! why, then, do you read it?"

"To learn how men have suffered and endured."

The brilliant color leaps up anew in her cheeks. "Few read Ovid for the lessons he teaches," she said, demurely.

"Julia!" It was the voice of the delicate lady, slightly elevated and vibrant with well-bred horror.

"Coming, mamma!" And she turned, gathering up the folds of her riding-skirt, and throwing him a half-laughing, half-defiant glance over her shoulder. "It is the Heroides you should read for its lessons," she said, in tones which bore a covert sneer.

"My dear Julia!" This time it was the young exquisite, Alfred of the "squint."

"Don't bother, Alfred!" cried the self-willed demoiselle of the riding-skirt. "If I thought there was the smallest hope of your benefiting thereby, I would advise you to a diligent study of 'De Remedio Amoris,' by the same author, only I can't consign you to depths in which you would flounder miserably!"

The delicate lady looked at her companion, shook her

head, and sighed lugubriously. Alfred switched his trousers with the riding-whip he carried, and betrayed his discomfort in an ill-concealed flush that stole up to his Hyperian curls. But the middle-aged man of the salt-and-pepper whiskers looked over at the girl warningly, albeit his keen eyes were brimming over with laughter. She went over to his side, and Chester heard her say, with that brilliant flickering color in her face,—

"Nonsense, papa! he is only mystified; do you think he has the most distant idea of what I meant? Not a bit of it! Alfred possesses an *ægis* in his—obtuseness."

Chester led the way over the grounds, half-angered at the mockery in that sweet silvery voice.

Captain Hollis and Milly returning from service encountered the party at the mouth of the shaft. Chester introduced his captain, glad to be absolved from a duty that was growing momentarily more distasteful to him, and he turned back with Milly. But they had scarcely reached the gate beyond the hills of gravel when the captain's voice was heard on the other side, and in a moment he emerged into view, accompanied by the young lady in the riding-habit.

She had taken it into her wilful head to go underground, and the captain, inwardly disgusted with his own weakness, had brought her to Milly for some protective disguise.

"They are visitors in the neighborhood, Chester," he said to his clerk when the two had disappeared indoors, "and they leave to-morrow, or I should never consent to their going below to-day. The Vosburghs, from New York, visiting the Courtneys. They are fine people; he is a banker on Wall Street; my brother has had dealings with them. That black-eyed young witch is their daughter, and the delicate-looking woman his wife. What an

unmitigated young fop Alfred Courtney is, and that little imp quips him unmercifully. Ah, here they come. Jupiter! ain't she pretty?"

"She looks like Clarchen," said Chester.

And she did make a very piquant Clarchen in one of Milly's short linen morning dresses, with a fanciful cap of Milly's pinned over her dusky braids.

"Persephone returning to the shades!" she cried gayly, "only I will come back, good people, for I have not eaten of the pomegranate seeds," laughing up into Milly's mystified face, not observing how "that remarkable-looking guide," as she had called him to her father, was flushing as he looked at her. The captain and Milly were not in the secret, neither being mythologically posted, so to speak, but it was to Chester the language of his past.

She threw him an audacious quizzical glance *en passant.* "You read the Tristia? well, so do I; and it is not often that a girl reads the Tristia, but not for the lesson, never! What has youth to do with remorse and regret and shame? *Au revoir!*"

"Goodness!" ejaculated Milly, when they passed around the "skiffins," "what a queer girl! and she can't be over sixteen."

"Chester," said the captain at supper, "that odd little lady sent you a message. She said I should tell you that she had picked up your book where you let it fall, and would keep it as a souvenir of her visit to the mines. She said you would not miss it as you did not care for it, and if ever you should meet in the future you should claim your own price for it."

Chester laughed with some surprise. Milly expressed strong disapprobation of the action: "She is a born flirt; why, my dear, she regularly ogled Chester, she did indeed. I can't think how girls can be so bold!"

Chester spoke then: "It did not seem boldness to me, Mrs. Hollis; she had a brusque, original way about her that was most unusual, and a too slight regard for the feelings of others perhaps, but she is so young!" and then Chester fell into a revery, as was usual with him, with that half-smile, sad and wholly perplexing, on his face.

"Well, what's your idea, my lad?" The captain was regarding him with his broad genial smile.

"I have strange fancies, captain, sometimes, and to-day that bright, fearless face filled me with a vague sort of pity. There was so much that was contradictory in its expressions. If the tenderness of those eyes do not triumph over their imperiousness, she has scant chance of a happy future."

"Oh, I don't know, Chester, I don't know; you are apt to be fanciful, my lad," said the honest captain, taking refuge in the commonplace. Milly said nothing; she not only did not know, she did not understand. Chester often talked in enigmas to her.

CHAPTER XV.

"WITCH FINGERS."

"My fortune leads to traverse realms alone,
And find no spot of all the world my own."
GOLDSMITH.

AFTER the same fashion the months went on at the mines. Chester at the commissary was faithful to his trust, as he had been on that winter evening in the frozen woodland road when he had fought with O'Rielly for his life and for his employer's money. If weighing out sugar and measuring quarts of kerosene did not quite comprehend his ideal of life and its possibilities, it at least afforded him an honest means of livelihood, and he had not earned the right to be fastidious.

As from the outset, he was quiet and reserved among the miners, but they had since his adventure with O'Rielly yielded him a willing respect, and he numbered among the younger men some very warm adherents. But amid this prosperity which he did not deserve, amid the comforts of his home at the captain's, came ever the haunting regret of his past, and memory kept his eyes hollow and weary.

Some days, sitting behind the low counter of the commissary, with the odors of tobacco and coal oil and molasses all about him, with the light entering dimly through the small panes of the two windows, barricaded by narrow shelves of candy-jars filled with mint-sticks, sour-drops, and brown taffy, he would ask himself with a sort of incredu-

lous wonder if this life he was living could be real. To have barely contemplated such a possibility in the old days would have sent a shudder through his entire body. That it was real he had the evidences of his senses; and he was not only meeting it, bearing it, braving it, but accepting it with a feeling of devout thankfulness as far beyond his just deserts. Such latent resources do we, each and every one of us, bear within us with which to meet the reverses of life.

And yet there were days when his mind revolted at the monotonous details of his work as too utterly disgusting to endure; days of weighing sugar, of drawing molasses, of counting out sticks of candy to the dirty-faced urchins, and of sweeping the floor, making the fire, and dusting the bales and boxes in the miserable dingy room. He was young and very human and fastidious to the heart's core; it must be forgiven him that occasionally he forgot his forfeited claims upon humanity, and chafed at what in his moment of clear, calm judgment he acknowledged to be far above anything he had a right to expect. Such moments of forgetfulness were rare indeed, poor lad, and for them he paid a heavy price, as one might have read in the hollow, weary eyes, in the haggard lines on his young worn face.

But thoughts of his past obtended ever as he sat in the dingy shop or walked to his meals at the captain's; and the faces of those who were dear to him looked out from every winding in the familiar grounds. He pondered upon them sadly,—

> "Did they feel how the moments were going,
> Were they weary or slow?"

In his thoughts, as in his heart, there was one memory that had a niche to itself, and his waking dreams became

almost tangible, devoted to that memory. He lived in them as in a real present, the delusion ofttimes so perfect, so alluring as to afford him for the moment a solid joy, a sort of unreasoning delight. But he would awaken; ah, yes, he would awaken soon. Vain were these happy dreams of a prodigal past, for the past was dead, a putrid body bound to his own with clanking chains, that, willing or not, he was doomed to drag along through all the years of the future.

The miners' wives came and went with their coal-oil cans, their baskets of eggs and butter, and wondered among themselves what kept "t'clerk" so thin and the shadows beneath his eyes so heavy. "If he ain't goin' into consumption I don't know t'signs," suggested the lodge mistress, Mrs. Gough. "Poor lad'n, he'll have naught 'o say on the subjec', and shakes his head when I'd'vise Pulmona, and for all his stiff ways ther' ain't no huppishness about him." With which rather disjointed sentences Mrs. Gough usually dismissed "t'clerk" from her mind and proceeded to look over her purchases.

September was waning now; the nights were growing almost cold here in the shadow of the woodland. September, and Chester had come to a landmark, bearing in graven letters the record of his past year. September, and for the commissary clerk the fading woods resounded with the Naha-like echo of a woodman's axe, the leaves rustled even in his fitful midnight dreams, the mournful "tu-whit, tu-whoo" of the owl sounded dismally in his ear every hour of the night and day.

"Hugh, I believe Chester is going to be ill. What is wrong with him? He eats nothing, and see how thin he grows."

Milly was preparing for visitors, and the entire house was undergoing a revolutionary period which was to result

in the utter extirpation of cobwebs, dust, and dirt. The servants were rushing about in a wild frenzy of haste and disorder, making pugilistic assaults upon mattresses, carpets, and curtains, and indulging in frantic ablutions with mop and pail. Milly herself, in her husband's old gloves and towering pink-cambric dust-cap, gave orders like a tyrannical female Phalaris condemning her faithful subjects to inexorable banishment, until, as her gudeman expressed it, "he didn't know where he'd stop."

"What is the matter with Chester?" she repeated, making a running jump at the cornice with a brush at the end of a pole, and bringing the brush on its return in unpleasant proximity to her impudent little nose, as though bent upon enumerating with mathematical precision the number of defunct flies the demolished cobwebs had harbored.

"I don't begin to know," replied her husband, thus importuned; "but don't notice it, Milly, there's a good girl. It gives him additional trouble, I am sure, when we observe him too closely. Well, aren't you most through? To watch your proceedings, one would imagine you were expecting a health board on a tour of sanitary inspection instead of your uncle and aunt."

The captain, good fellow, had accepted the inevitable condition of affairs in his home with the best grace he could summon, but the draft upon his equanimity had been heavy and frequent, and his resources about exhausted.

"If I were not so good-natured, I should be tempted to grumble, Milly, as the cook said in Collins's 'Frozen Deep.'"

"As though you were not as inveterate a grumbler as John Want himself!" Milly replied.

But the captain heaved a deep sigh of relief when he came home one evening and found the Milly of old, in a

becoming home-dress, plying her worsted needle by the parlor grate.

"Dear, dear, but this is comfortable!" cried the "martyr in deed but not in will," tilting back in his favorite chair and elevating his boots to somewhere near the region of his eyebrows. "Next time, Milly, give me fair warning, and I'll escape to some haven of relief until the turmoil is over. After all, what does such an expenditure of soap and water and physical force amount to? Do you see any difference in the aspect of things, Chester?"

And Chester, after a careful survey of the premises, missing the dingy hollands of the summer, and observing the pristine freshness of carpets and curtains, felt bound to admit that he did, whereupon Milly gave him a glowing smile and turned a contemptuous face upon the captain.

"What an *odious* married man your confirmed bachelor makes! a sort of Mormon husband, who divides his allegiance between his old habits and his new wife. Truly, Chester, I do not believe the captain would change his linen *once a week* if I were not here to insist upon it."

"Absent-minded, little one; nice enough, but absent," laughed the good-humored liege.

"So was Goldsmith when he vowed to his wife, who could not account for his empty valise, that he had donned a clean shirt each day of his visit."

Goldsmith's life was one of the few biographies with which Mrs. Milly had fortified her busy little brains.

"Well, and what became of 'em, my dear?" inquired the captain, anxious for the moral that adorned her tale.

"Why, he *had* put them on, one atop of the other, and brought them all home *on his back*."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the captain, "but I should never have done that. What! why, he must have felt uncommonly tight about the arm-pits. Chester, to hear my

wife talk you'd imagine I never wore shirts until I was married. You wouldn't have Chester believe I visited you in Leander's guise, my dear!"

"I don't know anything about Leanders," said Milly, resenting the amused gleam in the clerk's blue eyes, and feeling called upon thereby to express her mind more decidedly even than usual; "but there is *one* thing I *do* know, and that is, whenever a man marries he suddenly affects a supreme indifference for not only fresh linen, but even the order and cleanliness of his home, only supposing he has married an orderly wife. It is upon the principle, no doubt, that wives and servants are not to be spoiled by encouragement. Now if I were a slattern, allowed things to lay at six's and seven's, was less careful of my coffee or the captain's linen, what a martyr he would feel himself! how he *would* sputter over the coffee and demand perfect linen! I think it is contemptible for a man to sneer at the comforts that his wife sacrifices time, patience, and bodily ease to provide!"

The captain leaned over and patted the glossy braids with his great gentle hand: "Tut, tut, little girl! who sneers? who won't praise his little wife when she deserves it? Only, my dear, I *have* felt uncommonly like a refugee this past week, and I *am* glad we will have something more appetizing for dinner to-morrow than a cold joint and baked beans. No doubt these semi-annual renovations are entirely necessary, but, like discrimination and discretion, they don't come natural to every one. See, I've a bruise on four fingers and a cut on my thumb, and as for this," holding out his left hand, much the worse for wear, "I can only be thankful I have escaped with it whole. Those little carpet-hammers, innocent as they look, play the deuce with a fellow's nails, and I wouldn't like to submit my cranium to a phrenologist's inspection

just now for fear he would be puzzled to find names for all its remarkable developments. When a fellow from the superior altitude of a step-ladder essays to nail a 'lambkin,' as our gentle Bridget dubs it, beneath a cornice that affords you just two inches moving room, it isn't to be wondered at if one's foretop falls a sacrifice."

By this time the captain had gained his point, and Milly was laughing heartily. She led the way to supper in the best humor imaginable.

"And now, Chester, what do you think of my contribution to the 'comforts' my wife takes such credit for?"

"I think, as Jarvis said of Sir William Honeywood in your wife's favorite author, 'it is not without reason that the world allows thee to be the best of men.'"

The captain stammered, looking utterly confused. "Bless me, boy, you've always a quotation cut and dried for every occasion; how do you remember 'em all, and where do you find 'em?"

"You should rather condemn me for that, captain. I believe it is considered out of taste in literature, but to answer you with another, Burns says in one of his letters —have you read them?—'I like to have quotations for every occasion; they give one's ideas so pat, and save one the trouble of finding expression adequate to one's feelings'; and again, in another letter, he says, 'I pick up favorite quotations and store them in my mind as ready armor, offensive or defensive, amid the struggle of this turbulent existence.'"

"Then your memory doesn't play you tricks?"

"Not often."

And the captain wondered at the shadow that suddenly darkened the face of "the lad."

"Milly," said her husband at supper, resuming the mooted subject with that peculiar persistence that be-

longed to him, "I venture to say that, after all your work and trouble, your Aunt Edith will not notice whether your carpets are clean or dusty; she's always looking miles ahead with those strange eyes of hers."

"Yes, she will; auntie notices everything, little as you think it; but even if she did not, I shall enjoy them all the more from knowing that everything is 'spick and span.' Try some." This last to Chester, who had drawn a large glass bowl towards him and was looking into it with ingenuous curiosity. "Try some, they are perfectly charming! 'Witch-fingers' and 'tangled-breeches' we call them at Willams. I made them specially for Blanche, Uncle Herbert's baby-girl. 'Cousin Milly's witch-fingers,' she used to call them."

They might have been veritable witch-fingers, judging from Chester's face as he held the snowy, sugar-encrusted dainty and gazed at Milly with that dazed look in his eyes.

"Willams!" he echoed, shaken out of his habitual self-control. "Willams! why, what do you know of Willams?"

Milly looked at him curiously. "I was born at Willams, and married from there, and all my people live there. Dr. Herbert Sinclair, the chief physician in Willams, is my uncle."

"And it is they you are expecting?"

"Yes; I thought you knew." She felt curious to know what his emotion meant, but a warning glance from her husband checked the query on her lips.

Chester finished his supper in silence, eating every crumb of the delicate white morsel, draining the last drop in his cup unconsciously, then sitting on at table while Milly and her husband chatted leisurely over their tea, white, immovable, as Curtius might have sat when be-

neath him in the heart of old Rome that black abyss yawned at his feet.

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"Please, sir, Mister Chester sez as how you'll please ter walk down ter the shop hif you haint gone to bed." Thus Stable Jim at the captain's elbow, as he walked up and down the piazza smoking his nocturnal cigar.

"Well, I haven't gone to bed, Jim, as you see; run in and tell Mrs. Hollis I will be back soon, and not to wait for me."

And he set off around the gravel-hills and along the moonlit grounds with a warm glow in his heart, engendered by the mild beauty of the night. At the shop he found Chester behind the counter, his head leaning on his hands, his whole attitude indicative of weariness of body and dejection of mind.

"Why, Chester, what's wrong?" asked the captain, coming to a stand in front of the counter.

"Captain," and the voice matched the attitude, "I am tired and troubled, and I don't know which way to turn. You've been such a friend to me, captain, such a true, kind, generous friend, and I was tempted just now into making you a cowardly return for it all."

"Don't speak in riddles, my lad."

The "lad" leaned over the counter, looking eagerly into the puzzled face of his friend with eyes that pleaded for forbearance as never eyes pleaded before. "I've got to leave, captain, and I was tempted to sneak away like a thief, only I remembered what you and Mrs. Hollis would think of such a return for all your kindness, and I could not. I value your opinion, captain, even more than I did when you trusted me, a stranger, with your money."

"You've got to leave?"

"Yes; it is a part of my punishment that I am safe nowhere long; but I did think to rest here, and, oh! it is

bitter to leave, for never again shall I find such friends as you and your wife have been to me."

"And you will not trust me with your secret?"

"No, I cannot; you are a law-abiding man; your heart is gentle as a woman's, but your judgment could not withhold its condemnation. You believed in me when everything was against me, but you could no longer believe in the face of evidence that would convict me twice over. If ever the day comes when I can clear this mystery——" but he interrupted himself, flinging his arms up with the old curious gesture. Between him and his friend came the ghastly face of his past, and he knew that the day would never dawn when the weight of that black secret would be lifted from his life.

Captain Hollis walked behind the counter unsteadily; there were blurring mists before his kind eyes. "Chester," he said, laying his hand on the clerk's shoulder, "look up, boy, don't take it like that; I believe you; I trust you in spite of all. Didn't I tell you that I did not seek to discover your secret, and remember, boy, you said yourself it was not crime in intention. But to leave now when your services are all but indispensable, surely you won't have to do that, boy?"

Chester lifted a blanched face from his hands and wrung his benefactor's hand with unconscious strength. "Captain, after a few days it will be as much as my life is worth, perhaps, to stay here. I would have said a year ago that my life was worth nothing, but you see I promised not to cheat myself on that score again."

The captain pressed his lips together in perplexed silence. If he had his own conjectures concerning the nature of his subordinate's crime, he forebore to give them expression, but he did not again seek to shake his sudden determination to leave.

"If it is as you say, then you must go, Chester," and the captain stroked unsteadily his abundant silken beard; "but where? have you considered?"

"I have had no time to consider," a dreary apathy in his voice. Then after a long pause, arousing himself with an effort, straightening his tall figure and drawing his breath quickly: "Well, captain, don't bother about me, I'll pull up somewhere, the worst is over for the present. You are willing to trust me still; you know that I do not play you this shabby trick of my own will. Come along," taking his hat down from its peg and extinguishing the lamp, "Mrs. Hollis will be imagining that you've gone below, and you know she doesn't fancy that."

But as they struck into the white moonlight beyond the shanties, Chester wheeled round and laid his hand on his captain's shoulder with a tenderness that turned the action into a caress. "It is a poor return for all your goodness, but you know it is not in my power to stay, and one last request I have to make, my friend,—that you do not mention my name or refer to such a person having existed at the mines to those people who are coming, and that you will ask the same for me of your wife. You look surprised, small wonder; but it would not avail you anything to know my reasons. They did me a great service once, those people; the lady, Miss Edith Sinclair, has lived in my memory and dreams ever since, a white angel, and it causes me a bitter pang that she was forced to condemn me as utterly unworthy her charity. The last thing I have to ask is that you will not allow thoughts of me to give you uneasiness. You know my old faith,—a man makes his own fate. I shall pull up somewhere, and I have a neat account against the company, enough to keep me going until I can find a lodgment. You will promise, captain?"

"Yes, my lad; I promise not to speak your name to my

wife's people, though if it is they from whom you are fleeing I would advise you to stay where you are. Dr. Herbert, philosopher and philanthropist, as well as physician, would no more use his knowledge of your secret against you than he would encourage the process of vivisection; and Edith,—'auntie,' as Milly calls her,—whose name, by the way, is not Miss Sinclair, but Mrs. Holme, and whose life was blighted in the very outset——"

"Holme? did you say Holme?" Chester was leaning up against the gate, white as the wraith of a man.

"Yes, my lad. Did you ever hear of her husband? a worthless foreign attaché whom she met in her youth at Washington, and, succumbing to his beauty and wit,—he *was* a clever dog,—she eloped with him beyond seas, leaving a noble young lover in the lurch. She came back to her brother after two years, wan and heart-broken, a miserable, forsaken wife at twenty, with a baby in her arms; and when the babe, a boy, was about ten years old he was missing one day from the garden at the doctor's, where he had been sent to play, and has never been heard of since,—kidnapped by that renegade, no doubt. But if ever a woman has atoned for the folly of her youth it is Edith Holme. Your secret, if she knows it, is a sacred thing to her; for, as she has so often said, she is in fellowship with all who have sinned and repented."

"Mrs. Holme, Mrs. Rabys Holme," he repeated, under his breath, "and she took me in, gave me a mother's care and comfort, nursed me back to strength, bore with my weakness so patiently, while I——!"

He turned and fled down the white moonlit glades of the woodland as one who is pursued by a fiend, and the captain looked after him with a heavy heart,—

"Poor lad! poor lad!"

CHAPTER XVI.

TITHONIUS.

"Dust are our frames, and gilded dust our pride."—AYLMER'S *Field*.

A WILD evening in March! The trees in the belt circling the carriage-drive at Cheswick were flinging naked, pleading arms to the piercing gales that swept across the country from the mountains; black battlements of clouds overhead sent down a stinging shower of frozen rain at intervals, like the advance shots from an enemy's intrenchments.

A pitiless, fierce March day, whose icy blast was death to the early snowdrops springing to life in the borders, and when occasionally a sunbeam ventured to dart from a crevice of the windy clouds it was dashed to instant death "'gainst tower and tree."

In the library, before a roaring, old-fashioned fire of hickory logs, sat Mr. Cheswick, his right foot bolstered upon yielding cushions, and at his right hand a small circular table containing the adjuncts of his evening meal. The movement of his hand as he lifted his cup to his lips was strangely unsteady, and on his brow were deep furrows that ten added years of life ought not to have wrought there. Opposite the fireplace, erect and precise, sat Miss Bab knitting. The little silver side-curls fell glossy and well-kept as ever on either side the sunken temples, the bright black eyes flashed keenly as of old behind her spectacles, and the glittering needles,

guided by those withered hands, clicked steadily through all changes, all troubles, though the line of her cotton might have been the cord of Ocnus for all the comfort she derived from her work nowadays. The socks were multiplying to such an extent in that top drawer of the bureau in Miss Bab's room that a casual observer might have suspected her of a secret design to rival the Balbriggan manufactory. Strong, yellow pairs she knitted for the deserving poor about Cheswick, but these exquisitely-shaped, soft, white hose, smooth to the touch as satin, and ribbed and clocked to a nicety, were always carefully deposited in that "top drawer" of the old-fashioned bureau, with what tears, with what prayers, with what motherly agony of pain and suspense only the faithful old soul herself knew.

As they sat there on either side the hearth, Miss Bab's fingers flying, her old eyes grown dreamy looking over the spectacles into the fire, faint echoes of music reached them, muffled strains that mingled with the voices of the wind outside in a weird din of sound.

Mr. Cheswick set his cup on the tray and reached for the evening paper, looking up and down its columns listlessly.

"Did your tea suit you, Robert?"

"Very good."

"Are you comfortable? It is very cold. Jacob says the ice is an inch thick on the pond."

"Humph!"

"Did he tell you Duffer will not eat?"

"Humph!"

After which abortive attempt at conversation Miss Bab lapsed into silence.

The logs crackled fiercely; a grand pyrotechnic display went on behind the fire-dogs unheeded by either of them.

The muffled strains came stealing in again, soft yet distinct as the voice of conscience when, in the stillness of the night, it makes itself heard in our souls. Hauntingly, persistently the weird tones found an echo in the lofty room and in the heart of the lonely, stern-visaged master, sweet as the memory of happy days, sad as the barren regrets that follow in the track of wasted joys. How they mourned, how they plained, those heavenly sweet voices! He leaned his head on his hand and listened, while the dark shadows outside pressed closer and blacker, and the rude winds lashed the branches of his brave old trees. But the faint, echoing voices broke forth as he listened into a sob, a wail,—disjointed, dying, like the fortunes of his house and name!

"Barbara, call Amy, will you?" The old lady started at the high, rasping tones. "Tell her I want her, and send Jacob to make the fire."

The fire had burned down to the last log, and the twinges of pain in his foot were exasperating.

Miss Bab arose, folded her knitting, and went out into the hall with her old firm step.

It was not long until Amy appeared, carrying a little lamp, and the rays shining upward into her face revealed it much the same, except that the clear eyes were wistful and the corners of the mouth slightly depressed where once the curve was so firm and joyous. She set the lamp on the table at his elbow. "Did you want me, uncle?" she asked, stooping as she spoke and busying herself with the cushions about his foot.

"Yes, I want you to read me that table of the foreign markets,—the print is so confoundedly fine! Why did you stay so long over there in the cold? I have told you to have Jacob build a fire."

There was no answer. The long parlor, where Amy had lived out her brief idyl, was by common consent a tabooed spot. It was only when the fever of unrest raged highest that she ventured there, though she as often thought that, as to the pilgrim on Mount Hor, the fair height to which her memory led her only served to reveal to her more clearly the wretchedness and barren extent of the El Ghor Valley that stretched below.

As she sat in the Cheswick library waiting for Jacob to mend the fire, looking so fair and patient and home-like in her dainty attire, with the light-brown waving hair coiled in burnished plaits coronet-wise above her forehead, how little they guessed, old Aunt Bab, who had resumed her knitting, and Mr. Cheswick, scanning the columns of his paper, that her heart was smothering perpetually the one cry, "Where shall I find him?"

Jacob knelt in front of the fender, disposing his splinters with the precision of an artist. Amy went over to the window opening upon the garden. How drear it looked, the broad old-fashioned garden, with its bare hedge of currant- and raspberry-bushes, its empty beds, its desolate, wind-swept paths! She leaned among the crimson curtains, a pretty creature, young and graceful, making so fair a picture as she stood there that even old Jacob Martin, rising stiffly from his knees before the fender, heaved an honest sigh of pleasure as he looked at her. There was nothing in common with grief and suspense about her. She seemed only a womanly child to those two old people sitting by the fire,—a little serious for her years perhaps, but still a child, with a child's light fancies, a child's ready forgetfulness!

They did not see the little hand clinching a fold of the curtain, nor the dreariness of those soft eyes as they looked out over the wild March waste outside the win-

dow. They did not know how in her heart she was moaning, "Where are you, my dear, my dear? Do you suffer? do you live? Is there no help for you?"

"Come, Amy."

"Yes, uncle."

In a moment the quiet little figure was at his side, the gentle, sweet face within the range of his vision. Strange what comfort it gave him to see her sitting there in front of him, with the firelight shining on the bright braids of her hair! That was *one* act of his life he need not repent,—that fair young flower flourished in the upas-soil of his home.

"Does your foot hurt much? Oh, uncle, I am so sorry!" For he had covered his face with his hands and groaned.

"There, go on with the markets!" And Amy plunged at once into that startling array of dry statistics. From one topic to another she passed, pausing only long enough to receive her uncle's dictates as to what was next most worthy of a hearing. Most of her evenings were so employed, the only variety arising from her uncle's moods, which, when subjected to those maddening twinges of pain in his foot, were for the most part unappeasable. Sometimes her heart sank at the dreariness of her life. It would have been dreary in any case. The monotonous days, each one the counterpart of the other, passed at Cheswick with those two old people, even had she never known the pleasures of congenial intercourse and companionship, even had she not been burdened with that deadly weight of trouble whereof you know, for she was young and a creature of natural impulses and healthy imagination.

Cheswick was the one place of importance in the country, isolated from its plain, comfortable neighbors

by the reserve and exclusiveness of its master, and so there were no resources in the neighborhood. Unlike the generality of country estates, rich and extensive as it was, Cheswick had not for many years dispensed a graceful hospitality nor opened its wide doors with a carte blanche invitation to the world outside, as it might well have done. Perhaps to the delicate health of Cedric's mother might have been attributed this lack of hospitality, or it might have been that Robert Cheswick, who was never known to have evinced any partiality for the world at large, had arbitrated the matter at the outset after a peculiar fashion of his own. At all events Cheswick was without neighbors in a thrifty, thickly-settled county, where the farms were plentiful and fruitful, flanked by substantial dwellings in brick and stones, to whose inmates its customs, as seen from afar, savored decidedly of "uppishness." And so in this trouble that had overtaken him, this disgrace that had darkened his staunch old name, Robert Cheswick was not enriched by the sympathy of the people among whom he had lived all his married life.

They were alone, as they had been always. But in those glad days last year, when the hours flew by on wings, when the sunset followed the sunrise all too soon for the joys to be lived through, what had Amy missed from the outside world? Nothing, for each day had unfolded some new delight that the yesterday had held not in its royal sway. What had they missed, then, those two at old Cheswick, their hearts and souls bound in a union of completeness, with the future cloudless in anticipation before them? Could she dream that the winds were but asleep in their caverns? that the light in the eyes she loved had blinded her to the darkness that was coming on apace?

But now, sitting there day after day, learning lessons in housekeeping from Jacob Martin's wife, nursing and amusing her uncle, taking long, solitary walks through the lonely country, she began to long for something from outside, no matter what, so that this severe implacable silence might but be broken. There was nothing of the stoic in the soft tender nature of the girl, though she bore her own pain bravely and carried a patient spirit to confront the duties of the lonely days. She was young, a very child, and she longed inexpressibly for a friend, some creature near her own age to whom she might dare go with her troubled thoughts and seek comfort in her companionship.

"Mandy, do you mind Miss Amy?" Jacob had said to his wife that evening, while she was preparing her master's supper and he waiting to serve it, "she's that white and spirit-like one can e'en a'most see through her. The girl's breakin' her heart, I tell you. She ought to be sent away from this place; t'squire, for all he makes things uncomfortable with his cussin' and groanin', ain't beginn'n' to feel't like Miss Amy. The way she use ter laugh and sing! Oh, my Lord! how things does turn out!"

And his busy wife had paused in her preparation of "t'squire's" supper long enough to lift the corner of her apron to her eyes.

"It all comes along o' that rapscallion bein' brought here," she said, blowing the coals beneath the chicken broiling on the gridiron. "I heer'n Miss Bab tell him that; she know'd what she meant. I didn't; but you see she did!"

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Amy had read until her throat ached; Miss Bab had fallen asleep over her knitting, when Jacob Martin sud-

denly presented himself in the doorway, looking disturbed beyond his wont.

"Squire, Duffer is dead!" he said, abruptly. "I've had the horse-doctor over from Catoctin for the last hour; but he's clean gone, sir."

Miss Bab and Amy looked at each other with white faces. There was an interval of silence following Jacob's announcement, then the "Squire" spoke, but the effort to appear indifferent and unconcerned was a vain one.

"Well, Martin, it can't be helped, I suppose; order the boys to drag him out in the morning."

But old Miss Bab threw up her withered hands, the very picture of consternation. "Drag Duffer out! No, no, Robert! Rick always said he should have a decent grave and a head-stone!"

Old Jacob started, for that name had not been spoken at Cheswick in many months, and his master, forgetting his bandaged foot, turned upon his sister with a muttered imprecation, his eyes flashing such unholy fires of rage and menace as would have daunted the bravest. What sudden power smote the lightnings from those flashing eyes, the nerve from that extended arm, the speech from those quivering lips that lapsed suddenly into inarticulate murmurs, while a horror of dismay—and something that looked like fear—broke over his face, grown old and gray in these few moments as with the weight of years? Amy flew to his side with a low cry, for he fell back among the cushions of his chair, with that mute expression of horror frozen, as it were, upon his features.

"God forgive me!" cried Miss Bab, starting to his side, but falling helpless upon the first chair in her way. "Run, Jacob, for the doctor! it is a stroke!"

This was the second time in the last twelvemonth the

physicians had been called to Cheswick in hot haste to battle with that insidious foe, "a stroke."

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After many days he came back to life, a sort of life in death, in which the mind alone remained unscathed. It was long before those around him grew accustomed to the piteous spectacle. That menacing sentence addressed to Miss Bab were the last distinct words his lips ever uttered. The scarcely articulate murmurs by which he strove to make himself understood were intelligible to none save Amy, and more to her from the spirit than the letter. How the haughty, unchafed spirit struggled to break the bondage of the senses! how the stern will, dominant as ever, burned in the sunken blue eyes! with what feverish, restless impatience it beat against the prison-bars of the miserable, distorted body in a vain effort for liberty! but

> . . . "the strong Hours indignant worked their will,
> And beat him down and marred and wasted him,
> And though they could not end him left him maimed.
> Alas for this gray shadow, once a man!"

CHAPTER XVII.

"CLARCHEN."

"Voiceless and stern before the cloudy throne,
Aye, Memory sits."

VOLCANOES in the ancient world were the battle-grounds of the gods. What does that mean, in the mythological language of old Greece, more than this, that where we see great power of will and strength there also do we find fierce passions and contradictory impulses waging warfare in the soul of man?

When Robert Cheswick started life, with his hasty, generous temper and impetuous will, there were those who predicted for him failure as well as success,—the latter, premising from his unyielding principle, his lofty honor; the former, from the force of his passions, the untamed, wayward spirit of that will to which most had succumbed since his babyhood. Had different influences been at work, it were needless to say, Robert Cheswick's life had been different, though there are always the gods of good and evil contending for the mastery in the soul of man. And who shall dare say, while yet the issue is at stake, which shall be the winner?

Love, that inevitable condiment, sneered at by many as but a minor ingredient in the world's diet, had exerted a subverting influence upon his life. He had loved in his early youth a woman who had betrayed his trust,—scarcely a woman, a gay girl-butterfly, eager to try her wings,—who jilted him for a handsome foreign *chargé*

d'affaires, and fled with him beyond seas. The betrayed lover, who had lavished all the wealth of his passionate soul upon this his first love, who, with the prodigality of such a nature, kept not one heart-beat of affection in reserve, found himself at that early age utterly bankrupt, as far as those warm impulses go, so turned straight to the opposite extreme for substitution.

Well, when in the crucible of events honest love is turned to honest hate, a great many genial attributes of the soul evaporate in the process. Robert Cheswick grew into an old-young man, whose nature and habits still were lofty, but whose heart was cold and hard as the nether millstone. When at middle age he took a wife it was for no love of the gentle fair-haired woman who became Cedric's mother, but merely to keep up the customs of Cheswick and save the old line from decay. The gentle lady endured a fungiform existence through all those years she called Robert Cheswick master, for she was not slow in discovering that she owned no legitimate place in her husband's heart, and served but as an adjunct to the estate of Cheswick, along with its plate, its butler, and its handsome carriage with the family coat of arms on the panels. And when the father was shown his son, the open-eyed baby, with its mother's soft rings of sunny hair, he only said, motioning the nurse to relieve his arms of the light weight of flannel and lace that cumbered them strangely,—

"It is well: I have a son to step into Cheswick after me!"

Eleven years lived the gentle mother of his child from that day,—eleven years amid the dreariness and solitude of Cheswick, from which even the old customs departed as its master grew gouty and irritable,—eleven years, in which the child grew into the beauty and strength of

boyhood, inheriting the lofty honor of his father's early youth, the gentle sweetness of his mother's nature,—eleven years! twenty-two now since that day when he had motioned the nurse away with his child, yet distinct in his memory to-day as then, was the look in those patient, sad eyes, the eyes of his child's mother, when from the pillows where she lay she had turned their glance upon him, and he had read therein the breaking of her heart! Twenty-two years, and the despairing eyes haunted him yet! Well, if we sin, opposed to all dictates of conscience and reason, dare we hope to escape the day when that sin shall clamor for its reprisal?

March was over, the bitter winds had exhausted themselves, and there was the odor and the freshness of the advancing springtide in the air.

Amy came in one morning with a handful of daisies and pale-blue Neapolitan violets. "I gathered them in the borders, uncle," she said, as she arranged them in a little vase and set them on his desk, where their faint, sweet perfume might reach him. "The winter has been so long, but it is over now."

He looked up at her with a grateful smile, the poor old man, who would never walk along his garden paths again, and his lips made faint, murmuring sounds that she translated as no one else at Cheswick could.

She sat down on a cushion at his side and brought his right hand to her hair, where it rested, feeble and shaking, but with a caress in the fumbling fingers that she had learned to love.

"Now, uncle, what is it? I shall understand, do not be uneasy," for the sunken eyes were impatient and eager. She followed the inarticulate sounds steadily, comforting him with her unerring interpretation of them.

"You are lonely? Yes; you want to get away from

Cheswick? We must ask the doctor where it will be best to go."

But as she spoke the roses that the April wind had put into her cheeks paled suddenly. She had promised to wait for *him* here; he had said with almost his last words, "I shall know where to find *you*." What if he should come and find the old home empty?

The palsied fingers fumbled with her hair, the eager, sunken eyes read her face keenly. "You will go, you and Bab, and Jacob?" mumbled the shaking, indistinct tones.

"Yes, I will go," she said, taking the feeble fingers in her own and chafing them softly; "my duty is to you first of all; you have been a father to me, and I owe you a child's obedience. Do not trouble about anything; Aunt Bab and Jacob will arrange all, and I will go with you wherever you go."

He leaned back among his pillows with a deep sigh of content, and Amy sat there in silence, soothingly chafing his hand. She looked up at last with a smile, though her eyes were full of tears:

"We are very weak and forgetful, dear uncle, all of us; we almost fear to trust our hopes in God's hands, as though we with our own petty human ones could turn them into the mould that best pleases us. I have just remembered that all our plans are safer left to His guidance, so I am not afraid to leave Cheswick."

He groaned, looking down upon his lame foot as though he would have her believe the expression of pain to be wrung from him by an extra twinge there, but the girl knew better. His past was an unwritten page to her, but she knew that no physical anguish could bring that haunting fire of remorse so often into those sunken blue eyes.

"My plans are all of the devil's fostering," he thought, with another groan as his niece went out to consult his sis-

ter in regard to his sudden decision to leave Cheswick, "of the devil's own, and they're turned out of a fine mould." Then he sneered with those withered trembling lips, for the habits of a lifetime were not to be overcome by a few months of pain and illness: "Bosh! what put that in the girl's head I wonder. It is time I had something to direct me. I am growing silly and full of fancies as an old woman!" And leaning back among his pillows he tried to sleep, but the faint perfume of the spring flowers wooed his senses too ardently, and that sentence of her's, "I owe you a child's obedience," echoed in his ears persistently. It sounded strange to him, old and childless amid the loneliness of Cheswick, to hear his doctrine ring so sweetly from those fresh young lips. To him, who had believed that obedience was all a father need require of his son. Old and alone, with the vigor of his mind mocking the impotence of his body, he felt a chill of something like fear as he reckoned the pitiless fruits of his cruel creed.

It has been a mooted question if the sophist of Syracuse deserved his fate when the Spartan magistrates hurled him from the city at the point of his own bayonet!

When the days grew longer and warmer, and the broad outlying meadows were ripening for the harvest, Miss Barbara and Amy made ready to accompany the invalid on his search for health among the mountains of old Virginia. "There they go, for all the world like a rettynoo," exclaimed Jacob Martin's wife, watching the party off,—Mr. Cheswick bolstered in the big family carriage, with Jacob, much to the coachman's disgust, insisting upon guiding the horses until they were well over the Cliff-road, mindful and tender of the burden he carried; Amy driving Miss Bab in the pony phaeton, and a trim Buttons following on the gentle-riding pony that had been set aside for her

use since her advent at Cheswick. The day was most propitious. The clear waters of the creek wore the pale-green hue of the sea, and the atmosphere about the mill was misty with the white simoon that floated out from the low-droning burs. By the doctor's advice they made the entire journey by private conveyance, crossing the Potomac by the ferry that lay at the foot of the picturesque town of W——, with its panoramic views from either bank, its gray old aqueduct, its canal and sluggish lock that gave you no hint of its vicinity until the boats came gliding down with tarantella of horn, and were lifted safely through the gates on their way to the market town.

Fair and peaceful the green and brown fields of Berkeley and Frederick lay in the gray summer haze, and Amy drove along the white road behind the slowly bowling carriage, feeling the ceaseless pain at her heart lulled by the exceeding calm of the landscape. The partisan fury that had so lately raged in those quiet valleys had left its traces upon the gray walls of the old churches that here and there crowned the slopes of the hills, but the gloss of green leaves, the glow of scarlet berries did their best to hide the ravages made by fire and steel, and over all stretched the fairest sky, through all floated the balmiest atmosphere. It was like Eden restored, that exquisite valley of the Shenandoah, on that bright June day, and the bloody memories of the near past were far away from the longing, loving heart of the girl as she drove along it, cheered by the bounteous aspect of our Magna Mater, who, with all the pain she inflicts, still holds such golden treasures of air and sunshine for her sorrowful children.

At Winchester they stopped overnight, but a persistent summer rain kept them prisoners there for several days. The black mud waxed in the streets, and for all its historic traditions the invalid voted it "a dingy old place,"

and Miss Bab decided that "the old town needed a coat of whitewash well laid on." But Amy knew better. On the last evening of their durance therein, when the clouds had lifted just in time to give them a glorious bit of Lorraine color in the sunset, Amy, well protected by rubbers and water-proof, and followed by Buttons, who was assigned the willing task of waiting upon her every footstep, made a tour of the picturesque old town and came back to tea enchanted.

"The view from Mount Hebron Cemetery would reconcile you to anything, uncle," she said. But the invalid, more irritable than usual after his three days' enforced quietude, was in no mood to test the validity of Amy's conclusions. The fourth day saw them moving along, despite the miry condition of the roads and the unreliable aspect of the clouds.

Do you know that delightful little resort, only a few hours' drive from Winchester, set in a semicircle of hills, with the most charming walks in its vicinity, where the waters are varied and sparkling, and the ménu anything you may desire it, from fried chicken and mashed potatoes to courses in endless varieties and *entremets* as surprising as French cookery can make them? It was here our travellers pitched their tents, figuratively speaking, and Mr. Cheswick found himself installed in a roomy ground-floor apartment,—the second-story rooms being misnomers as to space,—not much the worse for his week's campaign in the fresh air, with limitless hopes in regard to the benefit to be derived from the pure air of the hills and the medicinal quality of the peculiar spring to which his physician had assigned him.

Our party attracted much attention in the dining-room, —the old gentleman wheeled in to table by Jacob, clerical-looking in habit and demeanor; Miss Bab in her stiff

black silk and creamy lace cap, and Amy with her graceful figure, her sunny brown hair, and those perfect features that Lavater would have loved to study. Few of the habitues had come in as yet.

At the time I write of, Washington's pet *chef* had charge of the ménu, and there followed him out to those green solitudes detained embassies from the great capital, foreign visitors, a diplomat or two, some of the heads of the nation, who had tested his abilities at those *crême de la crême* of State dinners, and who during the interregnum of duties owed the country were not unwilling to fortify the brain through the body,—and some charming people from all parts of the Old Dominion.

The change was very apparent in the invalid before a fortnight was well over; his hands trembled less, even Miss Bab could begin to divine his meaning as his mumbling grew more distinct, and Jacob Martin assured Miss Amy that "t'squire helped hisself a heap with his legs to what he'd done at first."

Amy, to whom gayety was impossible with that yearning anxiety in her bosom, held herself aloof from the society of the place, but unconsciously gained fresh tone of mind and spirit under the varied influences to which she was exposed from her stand-point as observer. More relieved from anxiety on her uncle's account than she had been for many weeks, and finding his demands upon her time less constant than they had been at Cheswick, she spent much time rambling with Buttons among the rocky hills and cantering the little pony along the leafy lanes of the country roads. And under these restful new influences her heart was gaining a quiet peace more like hope than any feeling she had experienced for many months. She paid heavy penalties too often for this lapse, which her fond heart called forgetfulness, for here, where nature was

so rich and varied, she was reminded too often of him who was wont to dive with her into its hidden depths and draw therefrom its choicest treasures.

But the strange peace came back to her heart, and she did not hold it a heresy against him she loved. Pure-minded, honest Amy, her creed was very simple, and she rested upon it with a sense of conviction and security that she might have sought for in vain among the much-mooted, the unsolved problems that are disturbing so many of our noblest and highest lives, alas! What availeth it, this vast waste of thought and energy on a subject so simple "if a man would but learn it and heed"? It is like reaching out impotent hands to grasp the snows of the Matterhorn, when here at our feet in Grindelwald lie snows of a purity as absolute, only in looking so far beyond and above we stumble over the pure, unmistakable evidences of the truth lying in our very paths, and stamp them out of sight beneath our hurrying, groping feet.

But, thank God! though "the times are evil and the days are waxing late," there are still those who cling to the old moorings, amid the conflicting beliefs and turbulent doctrines that are shaking the very earth's foundations; still those who hold with unfaltering hands to the creed that the *twelve* carried from that "upper room" through all pain, all privation, all patient martyrdom of suffering to the world that lay beyond; the faith that Athanasius thundered in the ears of princes as boldly as to the hermits amid the desolate wastes of the desert; to the high, pure simple faith that sustained Savonarola when, in the fair Italian sunlight of that May morning, four centuries ago, he went to his death in the sight of the assembled multitudes, as his Master did before him, "for because he died for others he could not save himself!"

Ah, thank God! there are still those to whom heaven is

a real and abiding city, with golden streets, a shining river, and a Tree of Life bearing in its fruits healing for all the nations, despite the formidable array of *isms* drawn up to wage battle against the old beliefs, last and most pagan of which stands that which prates of a body to be made comfortable and fed on all unctuous juices, while the soul, "borne on the wings of restless winds, goes roaming all abroad!"

Still those, thank God! even in these degenerate days, who, rather than renounce the old paths, would, like Polycarp of old, defy the threat of the wild beasts and lift an undaunted brow even to the cry of "*Christianos ad leones!*"

There is much heresy, much skepticism, much audacious fruitless questioning and open unbelief, but there are also many to whom *Eu-angelion* still carries the happy and blessed message, and to whom unity of doctrine is more than a memento of the ever-receding centuries.

"He knows my needs," said Amy in her simple unquestioning faith in Him who had dealt such largesse of bounty to earth and sky, "and if the blessings I covet are best for me they will come in His good time." And so she grew content, helped to patience by the beauty and glow of the summer and the varied interests that surrounded her. At Cheswick budding bough and emerald sward were fraught with associations that brought her only pain; she would not have been so brave there.

Among the later arrivals, Amy grew interested in one couple from the persistency with which circumstances threw them in her way,—a grave middle-aged man and a girl in deep mourning, who from her extremely youthful appearance seemed to have barely escaped the bondage of the school-room and short dresses. She stumbled upon them constantly, at the springs, in her solitary walks among

the hills, in her attendance upon her uncle when Jacob wheeled his chair out into the shade upon the lawn. They came to speech one day, Amy and the young girl in black. It happened in this wise: Amy was sitting beneath a tree near the croquet-ground, watching a group of young people engaged in the game. Opposite stood the girl in mourning,—so often her *vis-a-vis*,—aloof, as was Amy, from participation in the game, but, unlike her, following its course with interested eyes, and aiding a delinquent now and then by timely advice. She turned her back upon the game, however, before it was half played out, and came sauntering over to where Amy sat, a book in her lap, and her face half shaded by her wide garden-hat.

"Excuse me, please," she said, throwing herself on the soft sward at Amy's side, "I can fight with destiny no longer; it has thrown me four feet in front of you a dozen times a day for the last week. My name is Julia Vosburgh," and she held out her hand with a peculiar, quizzical smile.

Amy accepted the frankly-proffered hand with a cordial smile in return. What curiously bright, imperious eyes and what rich flickering color were in this youthful face! "My name is Amy Randolph, and I am very glad to know you."

"Amy Randolph! what a harmonious sound it has! but really now," with that quizzical smile, "am I to understand that you mean what you say, or is it mere *façon de parler* about caring to know me?"

"It is not *façon de parler*," laughed Amy, commiserating the worldliness of this very young girl; "I meant it, indeed. Ever since you came I have been regarding you half wistfully, I believe, for I have known so few near my own age."

"Why, how is that?" asked Miss Vosburgh, regarding Amy curiously with those brilliant dark eyes.

"We lived alone, my mother and I, in a very retired country home in Fauquier County, Virginia, and she taught me books and music until she died."

"Then you went to school?"

"No; then I went to my uncle, the invalid over there in his chair. I never went to school a day in my life, but I have studied a good deal, notwithstanding," and her eyes clouded over with the memory of those days under the mulberry at Cheswick.

"Oh, well," said Miss Vosburgh, with the air of one who settles a mooted question, "one doesn't learn the half of what one knows at school."

"No, I should think not," said Amy.

"Well, don't you play croquet and dance?" continued her catechist, "or do any other of those foolish things that girls delight in doing?"

"I play croquet, but I have never learned to dance."

"Ah, I wish I could teach you; I do *so* love to dance, but," with a glance down at her mourning dress, "I couldn't now: mamma died nearly nine months ago; not my *own* mamma, oh, no, but papa's second wife, a very sweet delicate woman, but I knew her so little! I am sorrier for papa than for myself. My mother was French; Julie D'Angennes of Rambouillet fame was her ancestress, and mamma had her name, which has been given to the eldest daughter of every generation since. I am named Julie, only they call me Julia here with their love of long syllables. Papa says '*Julee*,' as mamma did. But I am talking all about myself. Well, and are you not very lonely?"

"But I like to hear you talk of yourself. And you are really a descendant of sweet Julie D'Angennes of the

salon, who loved her Huguenot lover so well, and made him such a noble wife after long years of waiting! I shall fancy you have inherited her noble qualities."

"Julee" laughed a little scornfully. "How long do the psychologists allow for traits to run out,—how many generations? I believe I inherit nothing from the fair lady of the *salon* but my predilection for banter, which most people with French blood in their veins inherit along with me. But you have not told me,—are you lonely?"

"Not now; I enjoy the new scenes and fresh faces. I am not lonely now."

Ah, girl, with your shining imperious eyes you cannot look back over the dark and lonesome road that young soul has travelled:

> "So lonely 'twas that God himself
> Scarce seemed there to be!"

"I should die of *ennui* compelled to read and ramble and follow that old man's chair!"

Amy smiled a little dubiously. "It is impossible to gauge the extent of other's blessings by comparing them with one's own," she said; "and yet it is a mistake we often make."

Miss Vosburgh regarded her new acquaintance curiously. "I am not used to making these nice shades of distinction." And there was a clearly scornful ring in the high silvery tones.

"It is necessary in order to be just."

"Then justice obtains so rarely because we allow our personality to color our judgment, is that what you mean, Miss Randolph? What a nice little lesson you have read me."

"I had no such intention," said Amy, coloring under the sarcasm in the laughing tones.

"Then I shall consider it in the light of a gratuity and thank you all the same. There, did I not warn you of my unlucky inheritance? but, seriously, it is so diverting to meet one like you, serious and—and *ingénu*. Indeed, you are very queer. Oh, don't go, please! I know I have been impertinent, but I have an honest desire to be your friend. What do you mean to do with these long days here? I am tired of them already."

"Pursue the routine that looks so obnoxious to you," replied Amy, mischievously; "read and ramble and follow my uncle's chair."

"Won't you let me come to see your uncle some day, and that withered little black-eyed woman, who surely has not Penelope's excuse for knitting so continually as she does."

Both girls laughed; but Amy's eyes grew very grave thereafter, for Miss Vosburgh's simile was apter than she knew. Poor Miss Bab knit faster and harder than ever to escape the importunities of bitter memories.

"I do not know about taking you to my uncle. I am distressed to be so rude, but he never sees strangers, and Aunt Bab,—I think you would scarcely care to know Aunt Bab."

"Ah, well," and "Julee" threw her lissom figure into graceful Hogarthian curves on the yielding turf beneath the tree, "you can do as you choose about that, of course, but I am not to be tabooed your society," with an irresistible accent of pleading in her silvery voice that very few were able to withstand. "When the monotonous hours pall upon me you will let me come to you and refresh myself in these cool green solitudes?"

"Indeed," said Amy, laughing at the hyperbole of her speech, "you will give more pleasure than you receive, for to you I am but one of the myriad girls you have met

and have been amused by, while to me you are a single revelation, the first of its kind."

The girl jumped to a sitting posture, with that rich flickering color coming and going in her cheeks. "You delightful creature!" she cried, "positively, you inspire me with new energy on this hottest of June days. You have given me an impulse to my life here, an actual aim to my existence! See if I don't teach you what a fine thing it is to be one of the rosebud garden of girls, and as you progress in your study of your species you will give me, in exchange for the experience I shall afford you, a few of those quaint, serious thoughts that you suspected me of sneering at a moment ago. Is it a bargain?"

"A very unequal one," smiled Amy; "but if you are satisfied I am."

"What book is that you have? Ah, Heine. My grandfather knew Heine. My father is German, not only by descent but by birth; so you will please observe that, though I am an American citizen, I have unadulterated foreign blood in my veins."

"I thought there was something peculiar about you," said Amy, candidly, regarding her new friend with naïve interest.

"Well, *apropos* of your book. My grandfather knew Heine, and paid him a visit a very short while before he died. I have heard my father talk of it. Heine was querulous from pain and lethargic from opiates, and scarcely recognized my grandfather when he entered; but before he left he awoke, began discussing a subject, and became so interested and enthusiastic that he talked superbly and brilliantly for hours. Do you know German? I heard you singing '*Seid meiner wonne stille zeugen*,' from 'Stradella,' did I not, last evening?"

"Yes; my uncle is fond of the German words; he taught

me their proper pronunciation, but I know very little of the language."

"It is a joyous strain, fit for such a morning as this with its azure skies!" And Miss Vosburgh trolled the refrain in a rich silvery mezzo-soprano that rang through the green alleys like a chime of bells,—

"'*Alles theile unser Glück!*'"

"How wonderfully you sing!" Amy heaved a sigh of delight when the beautiful voice ceased.

"I have had the best tuition, both at home and abroad," said this singular young woman. "I took vocal lessons at Milan a long time, but it was labor wasted. What a foolish idea Americans have that they must go abroad to study music! I accomplished more than as much again in Boston as I did all the while I was trying the foreign schools, and for a poor girl to go to Italy for a musical career,—I can't conceive of any scheme so fruitless, unless of course she owns a phenomenal voice, and is picked up by some manager's agent. We have led a very roving life, papa and I, until he met mamma and married again; but it was what I liked, for we gained an immense fund of ideas as well as amusement."

"You are very young to have lived such a varied life."

"Older than you, I dare venture, Miss Randolph: nineteen last month. I am a May-bird, 'unlucky month for babe and bride,' the old rhyme runs; but I look so young, perhaps, because I have never in my life known a sorrow, except when mamma died, and that was so long ago that I can only remember the pretty dresses she wore, and her soft voice when she called me '*Julee.*' So you see I am a very wholesome refutation of all that superstitious twaddle about the unlucky month of May. Now, what

do those people want? Go back, Alfred!" she cried, as a gentleman started from the croquet-ground, evidently deputized by his companions to fetch her. "Go back, sir! There's no such thing as justice to be expected when you are captain of the opposition, and I am tired of being umpire, it is a thankless vocation. I shall have to go; or wait, won't you let me introduce some of them to you? They are all friends of mine, and might serve to amuse you when you tire of studying the genus in me. Very well," reading the mute protest in her new friend's eyes, "I don't want to influence you against your will. But you will not refuse to let me make a second at your séances under the trees?" She stood for a moment watching Amy pass from the shadows into the sunlight, and again into the shadows, until she reached her uncle's chair, then she went over to her friends.

"She is the loveliest creature! But she has refused to know any of you. Don't look so forlorn, Mr. Marshall; let us hope that her decisions are not as unalterable as Persian edicts. And wily "Julee" laughed in her sleeve, knowing in her world-wise young soul that to have thrown a halo of mystery around her new friend was to have created an innovation in her favor.

"Uncle," said Amy, late that evening, when with a low chair drawn to his side she sat ready to read to him from his evening paper, "I met a very interesting young girl this morning, a Miss Vosburgh, who has lived on the wing, as it were, nearly all her life, but has learned all her best things, she says, in America. She is very interesting, and reminds me constantly of Clarchen in the play of 'Egmont,' the only play I ever saw. It was when mamma and I visited Cousin Helen Agnew in Baltimore, years ago." Then, after a pause, "I wish you would let me bring her to see you some day.

She has seen so much, and talks well; she would amuse you."

"Like Clarchen!" Another had said that of "Julee;" but how was Amy to know that? and had she known, what interest would it have created in her, to whom all were strangers beyond the pale of the little world in which her young life had been spent?

As she knelt that night and prayed, "Oh, God! keep him by Thy guidance, save him from further sin wherever he is, and bring us one day to meet again, if such be Thy holy will," and arose from her knees comforted, patient, resigned, how little did she dream that "Julee's" bright-shining, proud young eyes had looked him over but nine short months ago, that in "Julee's" book-case at home lay the old brown volume that they two had studied together when, under the mulberry-tree in the pleasaunce at Cheswick, he had laughed at her eyes grown sad over the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, and the tragedy hid in the heart of the purple fruit!

CHAPTER XVIII.

"MAIEN-DUFT!"

"I will drink life to the lees."

TENNYSON'S *Ulysses.*

IT was a pleasant surprise to Amy the next day when Mr. Cheswick bade her invite Miss Vosburgh to pay him a visit in his room. Jacob was sent immediately with a note, and in a few hours afterward he announced the young lady, who was accompanied by her father. Miss Bab met them with hearty old-fashioned hospitality. The good old creature was pre-eminently social, and enjoyed meeting strangers with a keen relish,—an indulgence she had denied herself many long years. The call lengthened unfashionably. Miss Bab drew out her knitting, lending the while a very attentive ear to the conversation between her brother and Mr. Vosburgh, surprised and delighted that the stranger found no difficulty in understanding her brother's muffled sentences.

"Your aunt would be called a *tricoteur* in France," Miss Vosburgh said *sotto voce* to Amy.

"And what is a *tricoteur?*" asked Amy, half laughing, warned by the mischief in those dark flashing eyes.

"A *tricoteur* is a female who knits during a political discussion. Come, go over to the parlor and sing that 'Stradella,' won't you?"

But Amy protested; it was only to please her uncle that she ever sang. Miss Vosburgh interrupted her in her bright, imperious way. "*Allons!*" she cried, leading the

way to the parlor. It was empty; the guests were out in the grounds or in their rooms. Amy sat down to the piano and launched into the strain bravely after the first few lines, for she was slightly abashed at singing for this travelled young woman, who had criticised the schools of Milan.

"*Seid meiner wonne stille zeugen!*" There was no straining after effect in the round full tones, but the voice was music's own, true and clear in every note and flexible to a surprising degree.

Miss Vosburgh laughed gayly, sweeping her off the stool with a little gesture of delight. "You sing delightfully, as the birds sing," she cried, turning the leaves back hastily until she found the strain she wanted. "'*Oh, trocknet nicht!*'" she quoted: "why did you look so sad when you came to that? Don't answer if I am impertinent."

"Did I look sad?" faltered Amy—what keen eyes this girl had!—"it is a vain plaint; how can we expect to keep the 'dew-drop on the floweret's tress?'"

"Who wants to? The dew-drop is very fresh and pure and all that, but for me, I like the high noon best!"

The flying fingers chased each other up and down the key-board in a wild Irish galop, and the dark eyes glowed, the rich lips laughed with the undaunted spirit of happy youth, youth that had never known a sorrow. Ah, it was likely to be "high noon" with her for many a day to come. She played on at Amy's earnest solicitation, for never had the country girl heard such music as that, fluent and expressive, with the brilliant and faultless technique that betrayed the artist.

Jacob came to the door and put an end to this season of delight. Mr. Vosburgh was waiting for his daughter, and so this unconventional call came to an end.

"What a beauty she is!" cried old Miss Bab in a rapture the moment the door was closed upon them.

"And her father—a gentleman, and a clever fellow," mumbled her brother. Amy said nothing. "*Oh, trocknet nicht!*" The strain rang in her ears. Were these new scenes and new faces blotting out the memory of those happy days that had vanished like "the dew-drops on the floweret's tress?" "Oh, vanish not!" It was a vain plaint, as she had said.

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"Ah," cried "Julee" next morning from her seat at a near table, "good-morning, Miss Randolph! *This* is '*Morgen sonne*,' if it is not '*Maien-duft*,'" with her white hands curved over her arch laughing eyes to shield them from a too persistent sunbeam, "and I think you will scarcely have your dew-drops long to-day."

Many in the room turned to look at her as she spoke, the beautiful, imperious creature, who seemed indeed the very "breath of May." And old Miss Bab nodded to her cordially and whispered to her brother, "*Isn't* she a beauty, Robert?"

"Please, Miss Cheswick, won't you let me carry your niece off to my room for a while this morning? it would be such a charity to me if you would," pleaded Miss Vosburgh, after breakfast, following the old lady on her way across the hall to her brother's room. And Miss Bab, bewildered at the bare supposition that she was supposed to exercise authority over any one, least of all over Amy, conceded with a deprecating eagerness that brought the lurking dimples around Miss Vosburgh's mouth into full play; for a shrewd, keen reader of faces was this cosmopolitan young lady.

"*Allons!*" she cried, with her favorite exclamation, "I shall shock you with a sight of my room, which when

I am not at home is always in a chaotic condition. Bah! how little Rauch knew about women when he said order was their chief prerogative. My possessions stand in the same beautiful relation to each other as the guests at a Fejee feast,—there is no particular place for any one of them."

And indeed she had not exaggerated the existing condition of things, as Amy soon perceived. The windows, the tables, and brackets were loaded with all sorts of belongings in antagonistic collections,—bangles and bric-à-brac, crayons and chess-board, bonbon boxes and bonnet-pins.

"See! here are papa's bitters where my Florida-water should be, and a pack of lead-pencils reposing in my hair-pin basket! Alfred,—that is my cousin, Mr. Courtenay,—sharpened them for me yesterday. I could not refuse him that meagre opportunity of airing his superiority. Men crow over the strongest of us in the matter of sharpening lead-pencils, and justly, for I wonder if, from the days of Sappho down, there ever lived a woman who could round a pencil-point? Rounding periods is nothing to it!"

"Your book-shelves match the rest of your collections. I should say your mind was a cosmopolite also."

Amy had turned to the swinging shelves in an alcove and was looking over its contents. What queer, whimsical taste the girl must have if these shelves were any indication. These were odd themes for a summer-day amusement.

"Yes; I read everything. For instance: I cannot expect to escape the tender passion, so I read that 'Remedio Amoris' in case the god should not be propitious and I might find myself devoid of a remedy."

But Amy scarcely heard the gay, careless words; she

was turning over the leaves of the book she held with a strange dreamy pain at her heart. The familiar lines of the old poet wore the aspect of her past, and it is not with a smile that we look upon the cold features of our dead.

There came a light tap at the door. "Am I intruding?" asked a girlish voice, followed by a slight, fair-haired figure in blue, whom Amy recognized at a glance as one of the party whom she had refused to know.

"It is highly probable you are,—Miss Randolph, Miss Harper,—but I suspect it would be time wasted to acknowledge it."

Miss Harper took a rocking-chair, evidently accustomed to "Julee's" impertinence. Then the three girls lapsed into animated talk, as girls will on a hot summer day, given time and place, no matter how new to each other.

"Do you ever come to Baltimore, Miss Randolph?" asked the fair-haired intruder during a pause in the conversation.

"Years ago I visited a cousin of mamma's, a widow, but have never been there since."

"And your cousin, who was she?"

"Mrs. Agnew, Helen Agnew; she lived with her father, Major Duncan, near the Monument."

"She is a widow no longer, but Mrs. Holborne, a gay society leader, who keeps open house all the season through. You would do well to revive your relationship, Miss Randolph. It would be pleasant for you, perhaps."

But Amy waived the subject gracefully. She did not wish to appear singular to these young girls, who both seemed to consider life only as a means of amusement. She could not explain to them the difference between her life and theirs.

"Miss Randolph," said her hostess at parting, "I really begin to suspect that you make a scapegoat of your poor old uncle for all your sins of omission. I think I shall take him by storm, as I did your aunt this morning, and gain *carte blanche* for you to favor my whims."

And some time later she made good her threat. The invalid had grown to watch for her coming; she was a pleasant companion even for him, arraying her graphic pictures of varied scenes lived through against his experiences, that were gained mostly through books, and reaping a very satisfactory result from the process, both for herself and for him. To Mr. Cheswick, chained to his chair the long hours through, it created a diversion in the monotony of the days to follow her eager, glowing speech as she recounted personal interviews with some of the *célèbres* that he had only known from books, or depicted foreign customs and criticised the peculiarities of different nationalities with a graphic power of description that lent them the charm of faithful portraits. It was amusing to hear her strictures on "*d'une société polie*" in the land of her adoption, and to watch her betray her French blood in the indignation with which she scouted his expressed opinion that Frenchwomen had retrograded in all of woman's fairest attributes since her lofty ancestress's day, when the *salon bleu* erected its standard of perfection and purity in the midst of the most dissolute court in Europe. "The stilted formal life at Rambouillet," she said one day, with the color coming and going in her face, indignant at his charge of absurdity against her ancestors, "was but the natural reflux of the looseness and informality of the times, not but that it was the better extreme of the two, but, like Arthur's round table, it was destined to dissolution, for only in Arcadia do we find the requirements necessary to such a condition

of things. It is that now," and again the errant color flickered in her cheeks, "we see something of the *juste milieü* preserved in *polie Paris*, unless, indeed, you accept Emile Zola's portraitures. Papa will not allow me to read his books, but he has given me all their salient points, and he assures me that he deals in monstrosities and illustrates by exceptions."

"I am come to prefer a request of you," she said to him one day. "I have pondered the matter seriously, and have come to the conclusion that your niece shifts her disinclination to join us young folks upon a pretended—or shall I say fancied?—obligation to you." The merry light in the dark eyes disarmed the words of any impertinent meaning.

"Amy has grown very necessary to me," said her uncle, looking at the girl with a kind smile, "but I have no wish to debar her from any pleasure she may wish to take."

"Then you will join us to-morrow in our picnic?"

"Indeed, you must excuse me; I cannot."

"My dear Miss Randolph, have you absolutely no designs upon society *in futuro?*"

"None whatever," and the glance of the clear brown eyes was very steady. "My uncle knows that I have no desire to follow in the prescribed path of young ladies in my position. It is not only that I will not leave him, but I do not wish to extend the circle of my pleasures."

For a single instant of time the dauntless young foreigner looked dismayed, but she recovered herself with a gay laugh.

"White and soft and gentle as you look, you're a hard little piece of flint after all!" she said. "People have a disagreeable fashion of designating my peculiar characteristic of tenacity as obstinacy: they will never call it that

in *you*, Miss Randolph, but only because you have not black eyes that flash, and odious little foreign gestures that make one seem angry and imperious when one is only very deeply in earnest!"

Amy took the firm white hand in her own. "You cannot understand," she said; "how should you?"

Her uncle called her to his side when their visitor had left. "Why did you refuse that girl?" he asked, querulously.

"You heard me give her my reason, uncle: I did not wish to go."

"But you have another reason behind that, Amy; I should like to know it."

"Uncle, is it strange that I should avoid strangers? What strangers have I ever met at Cheswick? The world is odd and foreign to me. I have not been reared after its fashion; I have not been educated to meet its requirements; and besides—oh, uncle!—could we find peace in the world, you and I?" Then she turned from him in a sort of fright, but he caught a glimpse of her face, and saw it white, from the clustering brown hair to the tremulous lips.

Then he knew! then he understood! and he had thought that *she* had escaped the upas-taint! He reached out one trembling arm and drew the girl to his side. Tears came into his eyes, tears that all the fiery griefs of his own life had failed to bring there. He held her close to him, miserable, broken-down old man, and let the tears fall down upon her hair.

"God forgive me!" he murmured, "I thought you had forgotten, or, if not forgotten, that you had lived it down."

But she did not hear; she only knew that he understood and was not angry; that he too loved and mourned

the proud, rash lad that had been his only one. "I could not go," she said at last; "you will not let them ask me; my heart is sore," with a shudder, "and I have more patience to wait—with you."

"What is the good of waiting?" and his arm fell away from her; in his eyes gleamed the old fires of unrest. "You are young, child, you may wait; but I am old, and there is no reward for a life ill spent." He leaned back among his cushions with a sharp, deep sigh. "Call Jacob, I am tired."

When she saw him again he had resumed his usual manner. There was not a trace of that wild storm of emotion on his face. He called her to his chair and looked at her coldly, almost critically, and she was surprised beyond measure at his words when he spoke.

"I think young girls scarcely know what is best for them," he said. "You must let me be the judge of what you owe yourself and others. Write to that little '*Maien-duft*' and tell her you will go to the picnic. I insist that you obey me in this matter, Amy." And she knew when he spoke in that hard cold voice there was no appeal from his resolution. But she could not look in his heart and see how it was yearning toward her, nor could she know that he took this step with the purest motives for her welfare.

CHAPTER XIX.

ARCADIA.

"Under the greenwood tree,
Who loves to lie with me,
And tune his merry note
Unto the sweet bird's note?"

As you like it.

Amy joined the picnic next day as her uncle had commanded, and found, after the manner of girls, a good deal to amuse and interest her in the day's diversion. But the young people did not presume upon the incident. Only Julia made free to come and go at her will. "My foreign *effronté* carries me through; I wouldn't advise you to try it on though," she said laughingly to Emma Harper, who marvelled at her intimacy with "that reserved and distant Miss Randolph." But Julia, to shield her friend, did herself injustice, for she was very sure of her welcome, either in Mr. Cheswick's sitting-room or out under the trees where Amy sat long hours through with her sun hat shading her features and a favorite book in her lap.

A warm friendship was growing between them, a friendship which was destined to resist the heaviest strains, to endure the severest test. But they did not know that, those two, as they exchanged their girlish fancies under the spreading shadows of the trees, the one chastened beneath the weight of a present and abiding sorrow, the

other untamed, unfettered, with no vague fear of what the future held in its gift for weal or woe.

"I think I should have been an Arcadian had I lived in France in those days before Rambouillet!" cried Julia, one warm July day, when the mercury coquetted with the nineties and the two were in their favorite haunt near the croquet-ground,—

> "'Under the greenwood tree,
> Who loves to lie with me?'

"Yes, I should have been a fervent disciple of D'Urfé, and have led my lambs with the airiest crook imaginable, tied with my favorite color."

"And what is your favorite color?"

"Red; not Pompeiian or dingy cardinal, but glowing blood-red, the color of the ruby in the English crown."

"Red!" laughed Amy, "you would have set the æsthetic Arcadians shuddering!"

"Nevertheless, it should have been red, not pale-pink or cerulean blue as the fashion went. Imagine it! always to lie on greenswards, with the tinkling lute of your shepherd swain waking the drowsy echoes, or to follow him as he led by a silken string the snowiest lamb of the 'milk-white flock' and discoursed on the beauties of '*honnête amitié*.'"

Had "Julee" figured a decade later, she might have found anchorage among the transcendental philosophies of Oscar Wilde, and instead of languishing for the rôle of *gentile amie*, with a Des Ivevaux to skip by her side in silken hose, to the gentle twanging of his lute, she might have achieved a happiness as refined in

> "A walk down Piccadilly, with a poppy and a lily
> In (her) mediæval hand!"

But the "fourteenth century frenzy" had not reached its crisis as yet. Artificial *bouquets de corsage* had not been tabooed as barbarous infringements of a special law; there were no indications of faint lilies in the wholesome atmosphere; and the girl, though clairvoyant in much, could not have predicted the developments which awaited high art in the near future. It was with nothing of the Lady Jane's contempt that Amy echoed "red!" when "Julee" chose that color for her Arcadian costume.

"Red and yellow, primary colors! O South Kensington!"

The pen had not been sharpened for that denunciation of the dragoon uniforms, supposing that Gilbert writes with a "gray goose quill," or, as would be more suggestive in this age of dilettanteism, with a Roman *stylus!*

Ah, well, as our patriotic "Julee" said in extenuation of the affectations and stilted extremes of the "Astrée," it led to the enlargement on a higher plane of its best features in the organization of the distinguished *salon bleu;* so, let us hope, may our present æsthetic transfiguration bring about the *juste milieu* in the pursuit of true art, which is so sad a desideratum to-day.

"Yes; I should have made a very devoted Arcadian, only I doubt if I could have supported life in a garden of the Faubourg until I was ninety, supposing I had lived as long as that silly old ex-Governor of Caen."

"To say nothing of the rain," said Amy, "and the increasing infirmities engendered thereby,—rheumatism, lumbago, and last, though not least, a very un-Arcadian, unæsthetic cold in the nose from a too long continued practice of sitting on damp banks of muddy ponds: there were such in Arcadia, were not there?"

"What matter, they were *called* lakes. Everything's in a name, by Shakspeare's leave. I have a friend in

New York who prizes a very worthless faded rag of tapestry as genuine Gobelin that has never seen the famous loom. She also has a quantity of china judiciously labelled that I verily believe she values as far ahead of the Cesnola collection. There are wonderful latter-day enamels that she will tell you are genuine Limousins, bearing the date of Francis I.; Palissy plates taken from the gazettes only yesterday! and marvels in sculptured faïence, certainly no older than your own American Haviland, who has caused American industry to become a proverb at Limoges. Don't you see they *called* the pond a lake,—that made all the difference."

"And in your friend's case, were you imposed upon by the 'judicious labels?'"

"Often, of course; therein lies the safety of the frauds. But papa fathomed the secret of the Palissy plates. In our migratory periods he has picked up crumbs of information on every topic under the sun. He has adopted Confucius's recipe for happiness and wisdom."

"And what is that?"

"'They must often change who would be constant in happiness or wisdom.'"

"Amy!" The girls had advanced beyond the period of formality.

Amy looked at her friend inquiringly. The bright dark eyes were reading her own with a baffled expression. "I should like to know what brings that shadow on your face so often. It looks like care, anxious care. You are too young to have known sorrow."

"You know I do not inherit Arcadia, as you do." She spoke half playfully to hide the tremor of her lips.

Julia clasped her hands above her black braids and indulged in a girlish yawn of half ennui, half content. "I could not bear trouble!" she exclaimed, giving her whole

lithe figure a defiant shake and settling back comfortably against the broad tree-trunk. "It would prove the cold in the nose that would blunt my every perception of Arcadia's beauties; I should die under trouble!"

Amy shook her head incredulously. "It is not so easy to die, nor is it easy to live patiently, believe me."

"I would not live, patiently or impatiently. I am a cosmopolite, you say,—a butterfly, perhaps you think,—but when the sweets are all drawn from the flowers, and the warmth dies out from the air, the blue and gold from the skies, who wants to live? where would be the good in life? It is not in a nature like mine that 'despair sublimes to power.' The efforts to recover its lost energy might not be wanting, but the strength to renew it. There are such organizations, don't you think? capable of being crushed beyond all resistance by over-weight." She was vitally in earnest now, and as she spoke, with those deep stains of color on her cheeks, with the curious lamp-like light in the great dark eyes, that conveyed to the most disinterested observer their importunate demands for all that life can give, it did not seem at all improbable that should those imperious demands be unanswered the frail young body might fail in strength to sustain the passionate, disappointed soul. "*Eh bien!*" she added, with a little lazy laugh, the passion and the force dying out of her voice, "if trouble come, *après?* It has proved fatal to more than one of my race. I think I may safely trust to the taint in my blood for deliverance at the right moment!"

"O Julia!" cried Amy, shocked at the pagan utterance, "you talk as though death were oblivion, but you know better; you know that death is an escape from trouble only as we find ourselves prepared for its coming."

"I don't *know* anything about it, Amy. I only think, with Lorenzo, that it is better to eat, drink, and be merry, and get the very richest cream of life from its mantling surface, but when it comes to death—I do not know anything."

"Do you know how he died, that Lorenzo whose creed you adopt?"

"Something about it, yes; but tell me what you remember of it,—I have a poor head for history."

"You remember that Savonarola was preaching at the Duomo, and that while the Magnifico's courtiers all went to hear him, Lorenzo held himself studiously aloof from all his services. He grew ill amid the olive groves of his beautiful Correggi, where were all the luxuries and art objects that he prized most. He sent for the prior of San Marco, who, hearing that the Magnifico was dying, left his beloved cloisters and walked up the sunny slope to carry consolation to him who had sung, 'Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die!' There was guilt on the great ruler's soul, from which he sought absolution before death should come to him. He had sneered at the truths thundered from the Duomo when he walked with his courtiers under the olives in his garden; but when death came to him it was not to his courtiers he turned, but to the despised preacher for consolation and relief."

"And was he absolved?" asked Julia, and her voice was very grave. It looked strange and out of place, this dark cold episode of the Middle Ages against the warmth and brightness of the hot July day.

"No; it was not in a moment the hardening influences of years were to be softened, the tyrannical sway of a lifetime renounced. He went to the grave, mocking and skeptical, as he had lived, and the preacher went back to

his cell with a deeper shadow on his life, already heavily weighted with the burdens of others."

Julia slid off her elbow and leaned her hot cheek against the long cool grass. "It seems a comfort to you, Amy, this belief that death opens the gates to an inheritance of rest?" The girl's voice was lingering and wistful.

"It does indeed, Julia. I can think of no other thought so comforting."

Julia shuddered. "It is only a deep black grave to me," she said, half under her breath, "with nothing at all beyond it."

"O Julia! I am so sorry," and then they lapsed into silence for a while; Julia thinking—who shall say what? with the latent wistfulness softening the fire of the splendid dark eyes, and Amy striving vainly with the reticence of her nature to find fit words with which to express the faith that was the very foundation of her life. "Julee" recovered first.

"*Ciel!* what a *memento mori* turn our conversation has taken. Carlyle would have called you a death's head, Amy, which, after all, he preferred to a fashionable wit. What a dismal *détour* we have made from Arcadia, my garden of soft delights and honest loves, to the grave!"

CHAPTER XX.

LES BIEN SÉANCES.

"Behind no prison grate, she said,
Which slurs the sunshine half a mile,
Lie captives so uncomforted
As souls behind a smile."

MRS. BROWNING.

"GOOD-BY," said Julia, "I shall not expect you to write to me, because my Meccas by the wayside are too numerous to bear cataloguing, but I shall not forget you, *questa gentilissima*, with your brave sad smile; and when I come home, famous,—for I mean to distinguish myself, I assure you, before I am many years older,—why, you will come to me, will you not?"

A beautiful October morning, and the "*Maien-duft*," as Mr. Cheswick invariably dubbed her, was bidding them adieu. She was to set sail with her father for Europe in a few days, and the color was riotous on her cheeks, the light in her dark eyes imperious and unfailing.

Amy watched the carriage bear them away with a warning lump in her throat. How dear the companionship of the bright beautiful creature had grown! The very trees rustled mournfully as the gates closed on the carriage, and the sward by the croquet-ground looked gloomy and deserted. She should not care to visit the old haunts now that that young lithe figure and gay ringing laugh would be missed from them. *Maien-duft* indeed, the very breath of May, and she had taken it with her when she left.

That evening her uncle handed her a letter. "Read it," he said, and Amy read, scarce comprehending, an account of all the arrangements that had been made for their winter residence in Baltimore. It was the first intimation she had received of his designs. Another letter from Mrs. Holborne—the "cousin Helen Agnew" of her childish recollections—gave a very satisfactory description of the *ménage* on Monument Square, as fitted out and scrupulously directed under her own personal supervision.

"And we do not go back to Cheswick, uncle? Does Aunt Bab know?"

"Yes," her uncle nodded, looking a little restless and uneasy.

It was a great surprise to Amy. She had dreaded the loneliness of Cheswick during the winter season, but now that she knew they were not to return, with the perversity of human nature, she was seized with an indescribable longing to go back there. Then the old fear took a new shape: what if any chance should take *him* there to find the old house closed! Amanda, Jacob Martin's wife, was to follow them to the city, and only the gardener and his withered old dame were to be left to look after the safety of the old place.

Mr. Cheswick watched her as she walked slowly out of the room, and felt greatly relieved. "Girls can't know what is best for them," he pondered. "Helen Agnew will take her about and bring company to the house, and in time she will forget,—all women do."

But he did not believe this one would. Those eyes, true and clear as the heavens that stretched above his head, did not belie the nature of the girl: she would not forget!

* * * * * * *

The new home looked very strange and unhome-like

on that chill October evening when the three weary travellers mounted its marble steps and followed Mrs. Holborne into the vestibule. It was raining, and the clouds hung gray and heavy above the Monument. It was chill and lonely and silent, not a soul moving on the broad pavements, not even a child's face peeping out from one of the iron-guarded windows. Cheswick itself, lying so near the mountains, shut in by fading foliage from every glimpse of the outside world, could not have looked more desolate. "It is all owing to the evening," Amy said to her sinking heart as she took off her damp wraps and made herself tidy by the time the bell should ring.

At table Aunt Bab looked uncomfortable with the solemn strange butler moving behind her chair, and Jacob's post behind his master seemed destined to become that of a sinecure. Certainly Mrs. Holborne's choice of a cook displayed the most admirable discretion, if the well-served meal was a test, but poor Miss Bab could scarcely distinguish one *entrée* from another, so absorbed was she in the problem of what duties she should assign Amanda when she came. The good old soul felt doubly bereft in this new home, because she divined that her housekeeping offices, which were considered so important at Cheswick, would not even be called into requisition here.

After dinner Miss Bab and Amy followed Mrs. Holborne on a tour of inspection through the house. They found everything *comme il faut*, from the guest-chambers with their every accessory for comfort to the servants' rooms in the third story, from the cabinet-shelves in the drawing-room to the china-closet in the store-room. Evidently Mrs. Holborne was a woman of taste, except that in the drawing-room there was a too profuse ornamentation in crimson and gold, a too lavish breadth of picture-frames and cornice, and the paintings were not

just the subjects that appealed to the eyes through the heart, but there was no fault to be found with her arrangements.

"Did uncle order all these beautiful things?" asked Amy.

Mrs. Holborne smiled. She had a habit of smiling,—a sort of flimsy mask that only the most superficial failed to pierce. She was not pleased with her young cousin's query. An old man from the country to know what was needed in a *recherché* city salon!

"Oh, no; he gave me *carte blanche* to furnish, so I had Godey do everything."

"A fashionable upholsterer, Miss Cheswick," answering the inquiry in Miss Bab's eyes; "and the ornaments and bric-à-brac I selected myself for the most part."

Amy glanced around with a vague sigh of uneasiness. Everything was so garishly bright, the cushions so new, the marbles so stainless, every little Sèvres vase and Dresden figure looked fresh and unworn, as though just from the hand of the designer. Evidently visitors would not be tempted by the formal *ensemble* of this Godey-furnished apartment into prolonging unconventionally a morning call.

Poor Miss Bab inspected everything with growing dismay. It was all so fine, so bright and "spick and span" that she was reduced to the most sepulchral of monosyllables, as was Amy to the dreariest fit of homesickness she had ever known. The climax was reached when the housekeeper was called in, a very erect personage in a black bombazine that rustled as though with a sense of the dignity and importance of the wearer's position. Amy, knowing Miss Bab so well and understanding her expression of surprise and dismay, felt the first gleam of mirth that she had experienced since those heavy doors of her new home had closed her in.

"I had expected to superintend the housekeeping!" exclaimed the poor lady when they were again alone with their guide; "and certainly Robert meant that I should."

Mrs. Holborne lifted her eyebrows superciliously. She was a handsome woman, *passé*, but well preserved, and dressed to perfection; she had the repose and style of the world; she was rarely betrayed into an indiscreet display of emotion on any occasion. She spoke very quietly now,—

"My dear Miss Cheswick, you will find Mrs. Giles invaluable; she knows all that is needed in an establishment of this sort, and you will be very grateful for her assistance before the season is over, I venture to predict."

"The season!" Amy heard the words without a single pang of apprehension. "Miss Harper said she was a society woman,—a leader," she mused: "that is why she speaks of the season as *un fait accompli*, as 'Julee' would say. She will learn that one season is quite as much as another to us, and that the word as she defines it has no place in our vocabulary."

She went over to Miss Bab's room—across the hall from her own—that night before retiring. The old lady, in her night-wrapper and cap, was seated by the register turning over the leaves of her Bible with a very miserable, care-lined face.

"O Amy, ain't it dreadful?" she cried, raising both withered hands in emphasis thereof.

"What, auntie?" and the girl laughed as she drew a hassock to her feet and leaned her arms in her lap.

"Why, everything, child!—the house all glitter and show and not a real homely place in it, and the strange servants, and that stuck-up-looking housekeeper, and—Mrs. Holborne, your cousin Helen, with her everlasting

smile, that has no more heart in it than the fine furniture and jimcracks she has scattered all over the house. A pretty lot of bills Robert will have to pay! My! what has come over him? as penny-wise as he has been all his life, now in his old days to turn pound-foolish! What does it mean, I wonder, Amy,—all these servants and so much stuff that we don't need? I wonder if she has fooled him? She doesn't look like one to be trusted."

"O auntie, what nonsense! Haven't you often told me that uncle is very rich? I don't suppose this house is one whit finer than any one of its neighbors. We have grown accustomed to the old-fashioned furniture at Cheswick, that is all."

"I wish we were back!" heaved poor Miss Bab, with a sigh. "I like the old comfortable belongings there better than I ever shall these new fine things that look too fine to be used. Why, child, the great velvet chairs in the parlor at home are nearly a hundred years old, and strong to-day as ever!"

"Never mind, auntie, we will soon make it home-like here, though I too love Cheswick best. But when Cousin Helen goes we'll reorganize, and perhaps we shall coax uncle to let us give up Mrs. Giles. I don't see the use of her myself, with Amanda coming." Thereafter a pause, in which Miss Bab read her Bible with a perceptible thinning of the lines on her forehead. "Auntie, did you not tell me that years ago uncle kept up considerable state at Cheswick?"

"Yes, in his early wedded life; why do you ask, child?"

"I wondered why he had ever dropped the old customs, and why he should revive them now."

Miss Bab closed her Bible and proceeded to do up the shining short ringlets for the night. "I shouldn't

wonder if the same reason would answer for both whims, child," she said, with a heavy sigh, and she sat gazing steadily into vacancy for a brief lapse of time, her eyes dim with the memories of the bygone years, but she roused herself soon and gave Amy a good-night kiss.

"Maybe we can make it homelike, honey," she said, recurring to the old topic, "but old people grow so to places; it's like tearing my heart-strings to take me away from Cheswick."

Dear, patient, unselfish Aunt Bab! when had she ever said so much about any preference of her own? Amy's heart smote her as she went over to the big lonely room that had been assigned to her use, and, oddly enough, her memory went back to one day in that happy summer, when Cedric was marking off the croquet-ground, and with Jacob Martin's assistance had succeeded in wresting from its hold upon the soil a huge round stone that had served him as a child for many interesting exploits. Clinging to its mouldy sides were lichens and tendrils of plant-life and a thousand white thread-like fibres that had grown and matted about the granite while the young master was shooting up into a tall lad. "What a shame, Jacob!" he had said as he stood with flushed face and sparkling eyes,—"like the young god Baldur," she had said in her silly, romantic young heart, for he loved all things in heaven and earth,—"what a shame, Jacob, to have broken all these clinging tendrils and poor dependent lichen-roots!"

And it was with Aunt Bab as it was with the old gray mound of granite, except that her true old heart was warm and human, and so Amy was obliged to acknowledge her metaphor faulty.

Next day Mr. Cheswick was wheeled in his arm-chair through the house his means had enabled Godey and

Mrs. Holborne to display their vaunted taste upon. He mumbled a little about women's extravagance and asked Miss Bab if Helen Agnew suspected him of having amassed and hidden treasure at Cheswick, but his complaints were not formidable, and on the whole he seemed very well content.

"Do you know why I have done this?" he asked of Amy, who came to his side in the drawing-room with a pretty trifle in bisque for his inspection.

"Aunt Bab and I have been wondering, uncle."

"I have told Helen Agnew to bring company to the house and pilot you into society, and I want you to make things gay and pleasant for the people that come here, do you understand? I want you to forget everything but my wishes in the matter." This last he added defiantly, stung thereto by the wistful appeal in the gentle eyes turned toward him, eyes, strange to say, that brought to mind in these days those others that had looked at him twenty-two years ago with a look that he would never forget.

Poor Amy! Could "Julee" have seen her in the days that followed she would have marvelled more than ever at the strange white calm of her features, that bore upon them the unmistakable stamp of pain.

Mr. Cheswick fixed upon the apartment back of the parlor for his library, and it was there Amy exercised her creative powers, seeking to impart that home-look to its aspect which was so painfully lacking in the rest of the house. It became the pleasantest room of the mansion; even Mrs. Holborne, though she objected to the warm tone that pervaded the place,—a library needed the prevailing color to be a soft emerald green, restful to the eye as a June sward, she had said,—even Mrs. Holborne, it was observed, fell a victim to the comfort and beauty of the room.

A good many books had been brought up from Cheswick, all the family portraits, and a favorite landscape of Amy's that had hung over the chimney-piece in the long old-fashioned parlor. And the southern window—an ample bow—was filled to overflowing with the blooming pots and vines that she had brought thither after repeated trips with Jacob to different florists in the city. Crimson curtains shed warmth on the dreariest days, and at one or two art stores on Charles Street she had discovered just what she wanted in the way of gods and graces for her unsupplied niches.

Mr. Cheswick read from his favorite books, took slow drives through the park, attended by the ever-careful Jacob, and entertained a small coterie of old gentlemen an evening or two out of every week, finding infinite relish for the political and personal *on dits* they brought him from the world at large. How great was the change in him! He who had scouted the bare idea of human companionship as a necessity to man showed a singular, almost childish, aversion nowadays to being thrown upon his own resources for the shortest period of time. His habits of to-day furnished a mocking satire upon the cold philosophies of his life: and he knew it, sank abashed under the consciousness of it at times, the while he strove to excuse his weakness upon the score of his increasing infirmities of the body.

The dreaded day had been tided over for a long while, but it came at last. Mrs. Holborne, with that chill insinuating smile that Miss Bab found so rasping, suggested that as so many had called, and as it was about time to make some sort of step in the matter, what would Mr. Cheswick say to Amy's accepting some of the invitations that had been filling her receiver for the past weeks?

"You had not told me, Amy; I did not know that you had received a single invitation."

Her uncle's mumbling tones conveyed displeasure, as well as the lines of his face. Amy was silent.

"I hope you wrote regrets, Amy?"

"To most of them, Cousin Helen."

"Ah, well, then there's no harm done." The cold smile had never impressed the girl so disagreeably.

"If she meant something kind by it," sighed poor Amy; "but it is only a sort of picket she sends out to guard the position, and warns me to be on the alert. I am afraid I shall grow secretive and suspicious if I have much to do with Cousin Helen."

Then Mrs. Holborne suggested what would be a much better plan after all, that a party should be given by Amy's uncle, which would serve to return her obligations and introduce her as well. "Miss Cheswick is scarcely *au fait* in these matters; so, if you will allow me, I will gladly save her all trouble of that sort, and take the responsibility entirely upon myself."

"I am sure I will be glad to have her do it!" cried old Miss Bab to Amy and her much-prized Amanda, who had come up with the books and pictures from Cheswick. "It's just the work to suit her, and she's welcome to know more about it than I do. Good gracious! what would you have thought of me, 'Mandy, if at fifty I'd have gone about with a Tower of Babel on my head and my scrawny arms and neck bare?"

"My dear," said Mrs. Holborne to Amy one day, "I hope you will trust me with the selection of your winter outfit,—we are fastidious in such matters here!" And on another occasion, "Your uncle tells me that you play, and sing too. It is not possible that you have learned to sing in the fashion of the day without a

signor?" And still again, "My dear, can't you manage to appear a little less indifferent, or more interested? I am afraid you will never 'take' in our set."

But the whole truth came out one day when Mrs. Holborne suggested a little manual for her careful perusal, entitled "*Les Bien Séances.*" "You are not guilty of more culpable gaucheries, my dear, than most country-bred girls; but I take a great pride, absurd perhaps, in knowing everything I recommend to be faultless of its kind,—I bear that reputation; now you wouldn't like to endanger my reputation?" with the old smile, intended to be playful.

I think she did not read aright the emotions expressed by the rare color that began to glow in Amy's cheeks, the fire that began to burn very steadily in the surprised brown eyes, or she had scarcely gone on so calmly.

"You see, we society people," pursued the soft passionless voice,—"soft with fashion, not with feeling,"—"apparently the most nonchalant and unconstrained of any class, are guided by fixed rules, which govern the tones of our voices and I might almost say the corresponding expression of our features as arbitrarily as they do the style of our clothes. It is very necessary in the world to feign an interest that you do not feel, and that I find you not inclined to do, my little cousin."

But she was interrupted by another Amy than any she had ever seen, an Amy with glowing cheeks and eyes that were haughty and angry alike. "Nonsense, Cousin Helen!" she exclaimed, "who is imposed upon by the fraud after all? Is there no intuition among society people that they should not detect the feigned interest and gauge it at its worth? I am quite new to your ways and your world, and yet I am able to judge of it pretty surely through the one exponent I have met with."

"Bravo, Amy!" "Julee" would have cried, and would have accused her of using *vera pro gratis* with a vengeance, but Amy proceeded without any such encouragement, her Southern blood fairly aroused at what looked like a slur at its innate purity. She was as proud a little aristocrat, for all her gentle ways and calm, unruffled demeanor, as was the lad before her, who went out into the world depending upon the credentials he had drawn from the old chronicles in his father's library.

"Take back your book on *les bien séances!* as though a lady should ever need to use it! I have no belief in the theory that one's speech and manner should be governed by fixed rules; as well say that we are capable of governing the influences at work with our lives. Have you never read that action hangs, as it were, dissolved in speech, in thought, whereof speech is the shadow and precipitates itself therefrom? How do I know what thoughts contact with your world will induce in my brain, and you would have me prepare a set formula, guided by your *bien séances!* Bah! such rules and regulations may serve automata, not human beings who have a part of their own to play!"

"What a strange, unreasonable creature!" mused Mrs. Holborne, as her carriage bore her homeward, "with a temper too, as I live! Well, if I don't find her more tractable, I fear I shall rue my bargain."

Does it strike you as rather improbable that Mrs. Holborne, a leader in society, should go to all this trouble merely for the sake of a nameless debutante? You may read her motives by the light of her own revelations. Surely a woman who maps out beforehand every smile she means to shed during an evening is not unsupplied with a motive for such an ordeal as she is at present undergoing. A trying one it must have been, if we judge by the listless

weariness of her voice when she reaches her own home: "James," to the footman who carried sundry purchases from the carriage to her boudoir, "if Doctor Duncan calls this morning send him up, but no one else, remember: I am fatigued to death."

Some hours later the tapestry that guarded this luxurious lady's portal was swept aside, and a very hearty manly voice woke the rose-hued stillness of the boudoir. "I have not a minute to stay, Helen, what is it?" and a tall dark-eyed man followed the voice to the foot of the couch where lay "Helen," resting from her prodigious labor of the morning.

"It is nothing, Douglass, except that I depend upon you to free yourself of engagements for the evening of the 27th."

"Ah, the little girl from the country! Poor Helen! do you find her still such a hopeless task?"

"Don't laugh, Douglass; my only hope is that she will 'take' because she is so odd,—stupid I would say only that her speech is really quaint and full of all sorts of conceits; and she has a temper, for all her white gentleness."

"Have you conflicted already?"

But his sister did not notice the question. "Silly little goose!" she murmured, half to herself half to him. "As if all the cavalier blood of the Old Dominion could stand at this day without a knowledge of "*les bien séances!*"

CHAPTER XXI.

A MYSTERY SOLVED.

"Ich habe gelebt und geliebet."
SCHILLER.

"IT *is* pleasant to wear such pretty things!"

Amy stood in the centre of the library, blushing naïvely, and her uncle surveyed her with unqualified approval. Miss Bab walked around her with delight, surveying the graceful filmy skirts, and touching the pale pink leaves of the roses that garnished the costume, to make sure they were not real blooming ones. It was no desecration to true art to wear artificial roses ten years ago.

"They look as though they'd smell," whispered the enraptured 'Manda to her faithful consort, Jacob Martin, who in spotless linen and broadcloth looked more grave and clerical than ever on this important evening.

"Ain't she just a angel! If Mr. Rick could ha' seen her so!"

Then the two old servants exchanged glances of dismay. It was an unlucky memory to recall on this festive evening.

Mrs. Holborne swept into the library, magnificent in amber satin and topazes. "It is quite time we were in the drawing-room, my dear. Doesn't she look beautiful, Mr. Cheswick? Her neck and arms are perfect enough to have inspired Phidias. Come, Amy. Now, my dear, *do* try to be interested."

"I shall not have to try, I am already interested," laughed the girl. "It is all very odd to me, but I don't mind it nearly so much as I had supposed I would; besides, I expect to find some genuine people, despite your opinion to the contrary, Cousin Helen."

"I never passed such an opinion, my dear. You do look most beautifully! Now, *don't* say *outré* things, and do please remember that the people you will meet to-night are not likely to appreciate your nice little moral lectures. There," as the footman flung open the door to a slowly filing column of people, "don't move! your attitude is perfection." And Mrs. Holborne swept her superb train across the carpet and met their guests beneath the chandeliers.

"How indifferent she seems, and her eyes look tired," said a young girl to her companion, the "Douglass" of Mrs. Holborne's rose-hued boudoir.

It was late in the evening, and Amy had come to the conclusion that she had nothing more to learn of Mrs. Holborne's set, and she began to experience a sort of tolerance for the theory of *bien séances* as specially suited to their needs; for were they not all of the same type, —the gentlemen polite, very conventional and sedate, or brimming over with persiflage and fashionable *on dits;* the young ladies pretty, graceful, and gentle; the chaperones affable and kind? It was a very superficial view she took, of course, and not altogether reasonable; but she was so tired as she leaned against the great Steinway, and let her strive as she would to be interested the glare of the lights, the buzz of voices, the gay confusion of colors and costumes stood out with a panorama-like unreality against the dark void in her memory, where she saw always but one figure desolate and alone in a dreary waste.

"She has everything to satisfy her, I should think," resumed the young lady whose remark we have interrupted so flagrantly: "youth, beauty, and wealth,—a magic trio."

"Wealth?" echoed the gentleman, inquiringly.

"Yes, she is her uncle's heiress. At least I have been told so."

Mrs. Holborne, standing near, exulted inwardly. It would have been awkward for her to have included Amy's prospective wealth in the list of her charms when she went to make a category of them for her brother's consideration, for that he should consider them she was determined. What could be finer than that he should inherit old Mr. Cheswick's large fortune! The position required the most wary walking. The plane of her brother's orbit did not run parallel with hers, it was much higher, much broader; and while he named its centre ambition, she must be forgiven that to her the term was so vague, comprehending as little or as much as you chose to make of it. If ambition was the desire to outvie all others in worldly display, to ride the very topmost crest of the waves of popular opinion, to rule like a demagogue for the mere love of authority, then indeed was it rightly named.

As Amy leaned against the piano, with those dark shadows making her young eyes so weary, a gentleman made his way over to where she stood. They had met earlier in the evening, but she could not remember his name among so many, all of which were strange to her. He was tall and strong looking, with a face that bore its own voucher, as it were, stamped in the honest, kind dark eyes, upon the genial lips, shadowed by a heavy dark moustache.

"Miss Randolph," said this gentleman, sharing her *abandon* against the soft fur-lined cover of the piano, "I

have been watching you from the other end of the room, and have come to the conclusion that you are not altogether satisfied with the results of your experiment to-night."

"It was no experiment of mine; the whole proceedure is entirely antagonistic to my expressed wishes." Then she blushed deeply, for she had caught a glance from her cousin, only a few feet in front of her, and she could not have read a more unfavorable comment upon her unlucky remarks than was expressed in that cold smile and superciliously lifted eyebrow.

"You will think me rude, perhaps, and I am sure you will be right; but you will be more tolerant of my error when I tell you that all my life nearly I have lived in the open air, and am accustomed to judging only *a vue d'œil.*"

"I can well believe that," he said, noting with well-bred deliberation the appealing sweetness of her glance, "but indeed you will find our world well worth knowing, only to reach the heart, 'blood-tinctured, of a veined humanity' you've got to cut deep,—no bird's eye view will serve you here." She lifted her eyes with a bright glance of comprehension in them that swept away the lurking shadows. They were *en rapport* at once, and she was ready to reverse her verdict in his favor on the spot. "We are not the little breed that Tennyson paints us; we do something more than prey upon each other down here in the dark."

"I thought so too for a moment this evening, when the chandeliers were first lit, and all this white finery was fresh and new," with a half-childish glance down at the training skirts of her party attire; "but they pall upon one so soon, the light and the flowers and the gay people, and leave one so tired. You are wrong and

Tennyson is right, for the vital principle of life is sustained by death after all."

This was queer sort of talk for a debutante at her first party. Doctor Duncan understood his sister's anxieties now; they shone in a new light. Poor Helen! with her worship of *les convenances*, her daily ceaseless prostrations before the Juggernaut of conventionality, what a martyrdom she must have suffered in training this *belle étoilé* for her first appearance! Doctor Duncan could have laughed, only that he was too engrossed in pondering the original substance of that shadow which had flung such a veil of indifference and unrest over those lovely youthful features.

"You will sing for me, will you not?" for conversation between them seemed at ebb-tide: "I have heard from Helen that you sing."

"Helen?"

"Mrs. Holborne is my sister."

"I was not aware that Cousin Helen had a brother. How was it that I did not meet you when mamma and I visited her long years ago?"

"I cannot tell, but suspect I was at Heidelberg then. Helen is my half-sister only; perhaps you forget that my father married twice. My mother was a German lady,—Vosburgh was her maiden name. I have an uncle living in New York, though at present I believe he is rambling over Europe with his only child, a daughter."

"'Julee?' Oh, I am *so* glad! Isn't she lovely? isn't she charming? '*Maien-duft*,' uncle calls her. She is my best friend in the world, outside of Cheswick."

"And my only own cousin: we have a bond in common."

People regarding them were surprised to see them clasp hands over the music-rack that intervened between them.

"How *can* 'Dug' be so ridiculous?" muttered Mrs. Holborne, moved from her lofty composure. "Is it possible I shall have her turning out a flirt? It is the usual metamorphosis of these sanctified young nuns."

"What about the song?" They had spent a delightful half-hour talking over "Julee," and the party was breaking up. Amy had shaken hands with a great many people, and gotten creditably through the shower of congratulations and compliments she was forced to encounter on the subject of her *début.* And now, when only a few were left in the drawing-room, Doctor Duncan turned to her with that persistent smile and asked, "What about the song?"

Amy shook her head merrily. "If you are critical, I warn you,—I am self-taught."

But he would take no denial. "I am an earnest lover of the art, but have only dedicated to it my one sense of hearing," he said; "so you have nothing to fear from my criticisms."

Why of all songs would she have chosen Thekla's song to-night? She could not have told you herself, but suddenly, as a gap in the shifting panorama reveals the blank wall beyond, so once more was the scene with its brilliant colors thrust aside to make way for that other vision,—a desolate stretch of desert-land, with a lonely figure wending its way thereon. "*Der Eichwald branset, die Wolken ziehn.*" And as she sang she was alone with the dark night closing around her, the oak forest roaring, the waves beating "with might with might!" And in the dark night she was weeping; her heart was dead, the world held nothing more for her,—

> "Thou Holy One, call thy child home:
> I have lived and have loved!"

"Jacob, close that door," mumbled Jacob's master, looking spent and weary beneath the white light of the chandeliers; "lower those lights, and help me to bed."

Why had she chosen that song to-night? It was the death's head at the feast, a hideous grinning skull of bones where all else was so festal and so gay!

"Ah," thought Doctor Duncan, standing quiet and observant by her side, "I have fathomed the secret of those weary young eyes, I have caught the shadow that veils their laughter: *Ich habe gelebt und geliebet.*"

* * * * * * *

"O Mr. Rick, my lad," sighed Jacob Martin, as in the ante-chamber of his master's room he hung his best suit in its cupboard and made ready for bed, "who'd ever ha' thought o' this in them days when I larned ye to ride and to row and to swim! The old master's heart is longin' for ye, and Miss Bab's a achin', and Miss Amy's a breakin', to say nothin' o' old Jacob Martin's, my boy!" And the sturdy old servitor blew his nose, and the candle went out with the same puff.

CHAPTER XXII.

FATALITY.

"Leave it nameless, the grave of the grief that is past,
Be its sole sign the silence we keep for its sake.
I have loved you,—lie still in my heart till it break,—
As I loved I must love to the last."

OWEN MEREDITH.

BALTIMORE was very gay that winter, at least Mrs. Holborne's set was. The dear old Southern city wore its most engaging aspect, and Amy, though not altogether after her uncle's and Mrs. Holborne's prescriptions, was finding new strength and new developments for her character under these new influences. She had gained her point though, after her own mild, eminently reasonable manner, and it is not to be denied that her influence over her uncle was growing unlimited. Even Rabys Holme in his widest demands never gained his judgment, the while he gained his ear, as did she. Dear old Miss Bab's mind was restored to its usual healthy tone of content upon the dismissal of Mrs. Giles the formidable, and 'Manda's installation in her old position as chief cook and factotum in general, and Amy was conceded the use of her own judgment in the matter of party-going. "Uncle," she had said, with her usual candor, when the subject was under discussion, "if I were an accession to society, it might make a difference; instead, there are very few who would notice my absence, and they can find me here. If you will allow me voice in the

matter, I will promise not to eschew gayety, only partake of it in moderation."

But Mrs. Holborne's sway was over. In the rose-hued boudoir that lady lay among the cushions, and fumed over the days and hours wasted in trying "to reduce that little barbarian to reason."

"She is far from being stupid, I do assure you, Dug, but her *bêtises!* when she could be a belle with all her grace and money."

"Dug" said nothing, stretched in one of his sister's sleep-inducing *fauteuils*, his eyes half closed, his strong right hand hanging limply over the arm.

"I do believe he is asleep," came in hurt, plaintive tones from the couch.

Yes, "Dug" was asleep,—the great strong brave fellow,—in a very hasheesh dream, from which no friendly warning voice called him to awaken; and his dreams were filled with shifting forms that wore ever the same slight shape, and always the same "primrose face and a faint pink smile so sweet and cold." Had he forgotten the secret he fathomed behind those lovely eyes that gave them their dark grave weariness? had he forgotten that he caught the shadow and fixed it for one tangible instant of time that night when she sung "*Ich habe gelebt und geliebet?*" If he has not forgotten he heeds not the memory, and when the lamps were lighted along the thoroughfares and Helen had gone out to her carriage in the shimmer of pearls and costly robe to offer incense upon the altars of her own particular deities in the joss-house of civilized paganism, he took his hat and threaded his way along the crowded streets until he reached the stately silence of the square about the Monument, and then it took his feet short while to "find the door where his heart had gone before."

She was in the drawing-room; had only just come in from a drive, but something had happened to disturb the serenity of her features, and there was the glint of tears on the golden-brown lashes. "You look troubled: may I ask what has happened?" he said as she rose to greet him. She had seen so much of him during the winter, both at home and abroad, and his coming was never obtrusive nor unwelcome. He had become a delightful and congenial companion, second only to "Julee."

"Uncle gave me a happy surprise," she said, "and I was so foolish as to *cry*," with a deprecating half-smile that was very pretty and childish. "It was a portrait—of one—very dear to us both," she added, seeing that he still looked wondering, if not a little curious.

Even big, strong fellows like "Dug," you know, are not proof against that petty passion. "Your mother's?" he asked, inquiringly. Then, as she did not answer, he changed the subject deftly, and with that wise tact that indicated so truly a sensitive, generous temperament. "You have been driving," he said, and his eyes dwelt upon her with unmistakable pleasure. She was very dainty and fair to look upon in that wonderful muffling of blue velvet and silver fox-fur, with the vaporish plume of her hat heightening by contrast the gloss of her hair. "Are you tired?—would it be asking too much?—but there is a superb Lorraine at F———'s gallery. I have heard you express your enjoyment of his subjects. This is private property and only on exhibition for a few days. Would you care to walk down—only a few squares—and see it with me?"

"What a little thing it takes to tire me, you must think! I am not in the least tired and shall like to go."

"Indeed I wonder that you do not oftener grow

weary in your endless sacrifices to Mrs. Grundy, you young women of the world, though I have not been blind to your constantly waning allegiance."

"Oh, it is only that I am allowed a choice in the matter. I succeeded in persuading my uncle that I might be trusted to judge of my own peculiar needs even better than he and your sister."

They were out on the pavement now, and as they moved along arm in arm more than one passer-by remarked the singular delicate loveliness of the face so near his shoulder.

"The world is very pleasant, very witty and gay for a few times that you meet it, but it grows monotonous, don't you think?" questioned this *belle étoilé*, lifting her soft eyes to his, and not noticing how his in turn dwelt upon her face with the lingering appreciation of an artist when some entirely perfect conception is brought within the range of his vision. It might have been that but the tastes of the virtuoso were aroused, for Doctor Duncan had a reputation in that line, but it is not usual that in the eyes of a connoisseur alone you remark such a concentration of expression as one might have read in his at that moment, as though the will dominant behind that grave clear glance had been incited to a sudden very firm resolve. "I have grown accustomed to the endless variety of nature, the delicious kaliedoscopic views in books; that is why to me, perhaps society, with its same smile, its same greeting, its endless repetitions of *façon de parler*, as 'Julee' would say, seems monotonous."

He shook his head in dissent. "There is selfishness at the bottom of your creed, I suspect. You do not cut deep enough. It is too much trouble to do so, and *cui bono?* you say. Well, you must be the judge of that,

but it is scarcely fair to avenge your indifference upon the world."

"I do not," and she clasped one hand upon the other on his arm; "but how can you understand, you who see only the outside? I do not find fault with the world, though I have seen enough to condemn even in this short time; but I do find fault with the advice that bids me anchor to the world as a harbor from memory. I don't want to forget. I *would* not pass through life without a thought of what lies in the future; it is not in my nature to seek refuge from trouble in anything so poor and unsatisfying as worldly pleasure."

He looked at her curiously. "Your favorite Schiller says 'man grieves down everything, from the highest to the lowest.'"

"Schiller makes mistakes. He also says 'secrecy is for the happy and misery needs no veil.' Tell me, you who have thought and read so much, how would misery fare in this world without a veil? How has it always fared? Has it not been stung by the gad-flies of criticism, blinded by the rushlights of derision, if not hustled altogether from the thoroughfares?"

He involuntarily laid his own on the folded hands upon his arm, folded too tightly for mere pastime, though he chose to ignore that. "Why, little girl, with your soft eyes and childish laughter, you display the indignation of a neophyte when the poor old world comes in question. How is that? And you make the world a Nero, the jolly, pleasant-smiling old world, who only, when we spoil it with flattery and make it drunk with power, chains its captives to its chariot-wheels and burns its subjects to light the paths of its conquests. What spite have *you* against the world?"

"It is not for myself," she said, in a sadly subdued and

altered tone, for her mental vision was following the way of that wanderer who was ever in her memory, and it was for him who in misery, hopeless misery, was stumbling somewhere that the fiery indignation had filled her heart and found vent in her voice,—anger at a world, no matter how small, no matter how narrow, that had used him so badly.

And while he looked at her sweet face and thought of her, she thought of some one else. Ah, it was true what she had said to him on that first evening, when they two, strangers then, had leaned on the piano, and talked of the world and its little breed. "The vital principle of life is death," she had said. Some might have called it fatality, but not he, even had his eyes been open to the pitfalls in the path he was so heedlessly pursuing, because to him the power that many men have called Fate was God.

"It may be," she said, when they had looked at the Lorraine, fairly discussed its merits, and were on their way homeward, "it may be that I invest even society with the shadow of my mood; but I do not regret that I was forced into it, for I have met you, and you are so kind. I should not like to think what would have become of me this winter but for you. Oh, how kind you *have* been," as the recollections rushed back upon her of the pleasant surprises he had planned for her, and the long evenings his cheerful converse had lightened that would otherwise have been so gloomy.

"It is you who are kind,"—his eyes were luminous with a glad light,—"I am only one of the many. If you would not sit behind such triple bars of coldness and reserve, you would soon discover that I serve to illustrate the rule instead of the exception."

"Do you know what they call me?" she asked, looking up with a laugh into his face. "I heard something

that you did not to-night. While we were so busy discussing the Lorraine, another couple were discussing us,—a lady and gentleman. The gentleman said, 'Duncan is in luck, he has succeeded in thawing the glacier.'" She laughed again, but there was not a single note of bitterness in the clear musical chime.

"You are invulnerable on that point," he said, looking at her with some astonishment in his glance.

"Julee" would have laughed with delight and have called her *ingénu*, and have understood it at once with those brilliant clairvoyant eyes of hers; but Doctor Duncan felt a vague sense of uneasiness, for, as I have told you, he was eating hasheesh, and he accepted each phase of his dream as a reality. He had rather she had laughed less clearly.

"In every remark of that sort I read an acquittal on society's part from all fancied obligations on mine. They act as a salve to my conscience."

"A sore conscience that needs a salve, I should say from my stand-point."

"The physician's stand-point. Ah, well, I am willing to admit that my simile is faulty, since it is my heart not my conscience that is sore."

In her eyes came the same definable expression of pain as when, on that first evening, she sung Thekla's song. But he refused to read it aright. He would dream a little longer, aye, even go to the length of dreaming that the lovely face so near his shoulder was to shine on him, his very own, through life as it shone to-night, with that sweet friendly smile, in the moonlight.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE WORLD WELL USED.

"There is a joy in grief when peace dwells with the sorrowful."
OSSIAN.

"'He knew the world, and used it as a vehicle for the riches of his soul,' said Goethe of your favorite artist."

"But that is not possible for all."

"It is possible," said Doctor Duncan, in his quiet, concentrated tones." "Lorraine used the world in a good sense, but no better than may you or I; for to each and every one there is provided a route consonant with the talents he possesses, the advantages he enjoys. What matter if we paint our quiet *genre* pictures only to hang them safely in the loving memories of a few! what matter if we write no poems so that we live them to the eternal help of others!

Amy quailed before the steadfast light of those brave eyes. Her life seemed suddenly to have invested itself with the narrowest proportions.

"'Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these, ye have done it also to me.' Ah, child, have you tried the balm for a wounded spirit that lies in work done for others?"

It was said very gently, very tenderly, as they walked home in the moonlight on that evening long weeks ago, but Amy thought as she reckoned her obligations to this kind friend, who was coming to say good-by to-night, that for no solace of friendly word or deed had she owed

him so much as for that suggestion which had opened into her such widening possibilities for usefulness, with which came a constantly increasing content.

Here in the purlieus of this fair old city she had found work waiting for her hand,—many to whom the gifts of genius, burning in lofty words, pulsating through divine harmonies, or glowing with the conceptions from artist-brains, would have been but stones when they were hungering for bread. It was true, as he had said, there was a route for every one who chose to make the world a vehicle, a route consonant with each one's abilities. Lorraine had piled it high with the riches of his soul, and the bland, smiling, dilletante beneficiaries had each moved on with some warmer glow of feeling at his heart, perhaps, some purer inner thought that the artist-touch had awakened for the moment. But Amy loaded hers with blankets and warm shawls and tons of coal and baskets of provisions, and old women, withered and cold, blessed her with their shaking lips, and hungry children whooped with half-savage delight when the beautiful lady in blue and silver cut them generous slices of bread and butter, or gave them warm stockings and strong shoes to cover their naked, chilblained feet. Among "Doctor Duncan's poor" she found the long wished-for antidote to weariness and unrest. There was work for a dozen, and Aunt Bab was in her element, for you may remember that Cheswick's sole lack, to her mind, had been an absolute want of beggars, and Mr. Cheswick, as ever, was always ready for any demand upon his purse.

"How nobly you have acted upon my suggestion," said Doctor Duncan to her one day, "and at the time I doubted very seriously the propriety of having made it."

"It has been a blessing to me," she said, "and I can-

not thank you enough for opening my eyes to my duty. In every way it has helped me, even more than those poor people to whom you sent me. After a morning spent in that microcosm of sick and maimed and hungry that make up your 'poor,' I come back to my uncle's quite prepared to enjoy the beauty and luxury of my home. My great trouble is that I can do so little; with all uncle's generosity I cannot provide for all. If I were a Lady Burdett-Coutts now!"

But he interrupted her, looking down upon her face with that lingering gaze that always seemed to gather up its charms one by one. "The spirit makes the deed acceptable," he said. "A cup of cold water is the same in His sight as the lavished wealth of a Rothschild. 'She hath done what she could.' I think if at the last we find that written down beside our names we need not fear to meet the assembled hosts."

What a pure noble Christian he was, this man, who lived in the world and loved it so justly and yet kept himself unspotted from it! And Amy, in living for others, was doing more for herself than she was aware. Ah, there is a grand law of compensation working in the whole scheme of existence.

Have you not proved it? Say you are weary, discouraged, almost hopeless, the conditions of your life so galling, the monotonous round of your duties so untiring, until you wonder with a sickening sense of helplessness where you shall gain patience and strength to endure the thraldom of the weary hours. Oh, have you not felt it, that impotence in the hands of Time, that blind incredulous doubt of the justice that reigns forever above these dim lives of ours?

"Mamma!" cries a quivering baby voice, while baby arms clasp your neck and tears drench the piteous baby

face, all marred with some childish grief or pain. And though your heart aches, you make room for the restless little head above it, you hush the clamorous voices of your own pain to wipe the tears from the cheek against yours, and in so doing, all unconsciously but surely, the compensative force that lurks in your own consoling powers has acted in the rebound, as it must always, upon yourself. This is only one instance, the instance that arises most naturally to a mother's mind, who has known her own pain and unrest and bitter struggles with life's weary days eased and soothed and lightened by the touch of baby fingers.

But to us all compensation comes in God's good time, whether it meets us in this life or we go to it in the next. And

> "Who need grow gloomy
> Being free to work?"

Have you lost some Eden of delight? Then do not stand looking back upon the flaming sword that guards its entrance, but get work, as did our first father. Do you miss its rippling waters, its cool green shadows? Drown the memory of them in some legitimate labor. It will curb your restlessness, it will deaden your regret, it will make you *almost* content in time.

It is not fame that is satisfying, as hear Pope in testimony thereof, writing to Martha Blount: "Life, after the first heats are over, is all down hill, and one could almost wish the bottom were reached, were we sure that night would not overtake us at last." Nor is it pleasure that gives rest, for Young at eighty-four wrote, "I am an old, miserable, forsaken man," and for him the pleasure of the body had, in almost every instance of his life, outweighed the impulses of his soul. But he who on that memorable December Saturday said to the assembled

household around his bed, "It is well," of whom Von Berckel wrote ten years before,—

> "In vain the Sisters ply their busy care
> To reel off years from Glory's deathless heir;
> Frail things shall pass, his fame shall never die,
> Rescued from Fate by Immortality,"—

he, our great first President, found his dearest solace, his richest meed in the work that he did so tirelessly and so well.

What excuse shall we plead for loading the narrative with digressional views of our own? We will give you Montaigne for a precedent, with whose plea for red *versus* white wines you are doubtless familiar.

The winter days were over, and March had come to the city, deceitful as the traditional lamb that anon heralds his entry. The snow-drops were doubtless born in the Cheswick borders, the tulip-beds, the hyacinth-stalks, the delicate blue Neapolitan violets were making ready to start into life in the smooth green glades of the pleasance; but here in the quiet gray square only soft airs heralded the coming spring, and the sky above the Monument looked thin and blue and watery.

Amy stood behind the floating lace of the window drapery, looking out upon the street. Doctor Duncan was coming to bid her good-by. He was to set sail for Europe early in the month, and join his relatives in Switzerland. His health, which had always been so sound, began to show unmistakable symptoms of deterioration, and he was unable to resist the entreaties of his friends and the urgent demands of his own exhausted energy to take a rest.

"I do not belong to myself," he had said, in telling her of his determination. "No man with a work like

mine should neglect the care of his health." And he had felt a selfish glow of delight at the pale smile she gave him and the trembling voice in which she had expressed approval of his determination.

"But what shall I do when you have gone?" she had cried.

But now, as she waited for his coming, her thoughts were not of him. The borders of Cheswick, that the spring days would touch into rare beauty of bloom and leafage, led to one avenue after another of that happy land in which her brief past of delight had been spent, and from thence it was a short passageway across to the dark landscape, whither, always alone and ever receding, *he* travelled. *Where* was he this evening, while she stood here behind the falling curtains and thought of him? Was he pushing his way over obstacles in that unknown land whither his footsteps wended? Were there influences at work there that would cause him to forget her? or was he working and waiting and trusting to a future that would annul the record of his past? Often she felt a keen fear for him. His nature had been so healthy, so firm to resist corroding influences, but in his veins ran the quick passion of his race, and, sympathetic as the spark to the tinder, might it not spring to life and conquer him again, as it had done so fatally once before? Once it had been as iron to bend, as steel to resist, that strong brave will, but one little flaw, and, alas! too often the strong bar is marred, the lustre of the bright steel dimmed. Or had that one temptation to which he had yielded been opposed as a barrier forever to the passionate lava-tide of temper that had worked so many Cheswicks' undoing before him? She liked best to think that it had. Some might have thrown away all fancied obligations of body and soul upon such bitter provocation as he had endured;

but not him, with his keen, just perception of what was due himself and his God. She liked best to think that, where he was enduring and struggling, her love was as an ægis thrown about him, keeping his heart and hands clean for her sake, inciting him to renewed endeavor, to renewed patience and hope. For since that terrible day when Rabys Holme was carried a white, breathless, bleeding body up the stone steps of Cheswick, Amy had known all that he had suffered in silence from the treachery of his smiling-eyed foe, and from the terrible results of his passionate deed, prayerfully, patiently, she trusted God to deliver him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"CARPE DIEM."

"How sweet it is to sit beside her!"
Terra Incognita.

He came down the broad pavement, but did not see her standing there, looking out upon him from the shrouding folds of lace. If he had, the bent lines of his brow would surely have dispersed. "How tired he looks," she thought, "how very sad and tired!" And so it was with gentle commiseration in her sweet eyes that he met her coming half-way across the carpet to greet him.

How lovely she was, how dear to his heart! Nothing in the old world could compensate for the loss of this sweet creature. He sat down near her, and they fell into the old quiet converse, as though this were but another of the many evenings that preceded it and no parting awaited them in the near future.

"You were very kind to send me that," she said, designating as she spoke a large portfolio that lay on a table near. "Of course you sent them,—who else knows of my weakness for Rhine views?—and to think you will so soon be feasting your eyes upon the originals, you and 'Julee'!" with a little sigh.

"Would you believe it? I had rather stay here, here in dull prosaic Baltimore, if I could conscientiously stay."

"Ah, yes; your work is so satisfying and absorbing.

I think it is the noblest profession under the sun to alleviate pain."

"But we make pain too."

"As God does," she said, with that appreciative smile on her face that was more exhilarating to his senses than wine, "so that health may follow."

"I have a fault to find with you," he said after a pause.

"Only one? but cannot even that be deferred on this last evening that we shall meet?"

"It is *not* the last,"—his voice was husky,—"you must not think so," adding, in a quieter tone, "even should I never come back, there is one more evening left for us to spend here: I do not leave for New York until the day after to-morrow."

"But I thought you had come to say good-by?"

He did not tell her he had thought so himself, that sitting thus by her, with the beauty of her face so near his own, he was seized with a very pagan's frenzy to let the future take care of itself, and to drift regardlessly through the days, so that he might but come to her for the companionship and sense of delicious restfulness that her nearness ever imparted to him. He had *not* forgotten the secret of Schiller's song as it was revealed to him on that first night he had ever seen her, but he chose to ignore it. It was enough that her eyes brightened beneath his glance, that she showed such earnest, unmistakable signs of pleasure in his society. The grave, strong, mature and Christian man was lulling his perception to sleep with something of the pagan's "*Di doman non ci e contezza!*"

"No, not this time adieu, though it is but postponing the evil hour. I have no wish to say good-by to you, Amy." She looked a little startled. When had he ever called her Amy? The woman's nature asserted itself, notwithstanding her heart had been all along so far off

with that one dear love of her past. But she hushed its fluttering and met his glance with her own serene smile.

"Nor I to you; but the fault—the one fault that you can specify among my legion?"

"Why was not I allowed participation in that particular scheme that has reached such full fruition by now?"

"How did you know?" The color came and went fitfully as ever did that in "Julee's" cheeks.

"I was sitting with your uncle last Wednesday evening, and saw about twenty-five girls, all sizes and ages, trooping in through the area door, and when I asked him what it meant, he told me that it was a class you had been instructing all the winter in plain sewing, besides furnishing them a good meal, after teaching them to cook it themselves."

"Indeed Aunt Bab and Amanda deserve all the credit. Aunt Bab teaches them to sew, and Amanda to cook. You see, there was *such* discomfort in their homes, and we conceived the plan, auntie and I, of teaching them how to rectify matters, at the same time offering them recreation. You have no idea how well it has worked. It has been a great source of amusement to them to learn cooking plain fare and bread-baking in Amanda's airy, clean kitchen, and I have enjoyed my share of it, which was merely nominal, not to say that I have learned nothing in the culinary department myself. I think I might develop into a famous housekeeper if circumstances were propitious."

"And was that all, the cooking and sewing?"

"Not quite," flushing again. "I always read to them, and several times uncle let me bring them to the library since he bought the upright piano. That delighted them, —the music I mean."

"Did not my sister and her friends meet them here last time?"

"Oh, I was so sorry! but you know I occasionally take them through the hall and parlors. It seems to afford them such intense and wondering delight. That evening we had a new recruit in Janie Bratt, a very unyielding sort of girl, with such a dismal home, doctor, you could scarcely believe how dismal. She had used all her influence, which was not small, against my project, and resolutely refused to join the class. When she came I was so surprised and delighted, for I knew that she could do much to help me, if I could only win her confidence; so when one of the girls proposed that I should take Janie through the parlors to see the pretty things I did not dare refuse, and indeed I had no wish to, except that I did just a little fear callers at that hour. Still, I could not afford to compromise my hardly-won place in Janie's estimation, and who should come in upon us but your sister, Mrs. Patterson, and Miss Van Arden! Oh, I was *so* vexed!"

"And why were you vexed?"

"Well, for many reasons. In the first place it threw my charities, as they called it, in a very conspicuous light. Then your sister chose to assume that they all—my girls—were unnecessarily unclean, and that I was endangering everybody's health in the house by bringing them here."

"Poor Helen!" Doctor Duncan's laugh was essentially mirth-provoking. "What next?"

"Well, then Miss Van Arden—and oh! is not she lovely, doctor?—Miss Van Arden held up both pretty hands, and said, 'My *dear* Miss Randolph, you are *very* unselfish, and *very* philanthropical, and all that, but could *not* you manage to do your charities by proxy?'"

"Why, little girl, I had no idea that you were a facialist,—that was Miss Van Arden to the life; and you, what

do *you* say to these fashionable wolves in seal-skin and velvet, you poor innocent lamb?"

"For shame, doctor!" with a bright laughing glance, for she had lost all discomfiture at his discovery: "I? oh, I tried to be perfectly polite; but I was sure, by Cousin Helen's eyebrows, that I had made an irretrievable *faux pas*. I told her that doing charities by proxy was much like marrying by proxy,—in neither case could you be at all sure of satisfactory results."

"Not bad, on my word, *la belle étoilé*, but proceed."

"Well, there is nothing more to tell, except that the call was very stiff and very short, and left me very blue!"

"That was an unsatisfactory result clearly."

"Yes; I tried to reason with myself, but vainly; I had made some dozen hearts happier, but, all the same, I could not bear a sneer from those who knew nothing about my motives."

He laid his hand upon hers, with a touch infinitely tender. "'If ye were of the world, the world would love its own.'"

Quick tears sprang to her eyes. "But, all the same, the world's sneer hurts. I am a coward, my friend."

"It is that we have too much vanity," he said, speaking gravely and gently, still with the light weight of his hand upon hers; "we would have our motives recognized as pure and worthy. It is not enough that *He* knows, that a few of our nearest and dearest friends know, but we are tenacious of the world's, of everybody's good opinion. Stop and think: is not that it?"

"It had not seemed so to me; but I see that it is. What makes you so wise? You know me better than I know myself!"

"It is but the wisdom of experience, child. I have

lived longer than you; I have tested life's motives more thoroughly. Now, little girl, go play for me. It will be long, after a few days shall have passed, until I hear such sweet sounds again."

"But 'Julee' plays, oh, how beautifully! much finer than I. Never have I heard anything so splendid as Julia's music. It is all triumph and glad merriment."

It troubled him that she should so suddenly look like that, that the shadow should so veil those lovely young eyes. Would he never be able to exorcise the memory that stole her heart so often from her, as it was stolen now, while she sat so near, his hand upon hers, the brightness of her hair almost brushing his shoulder?

He smothered a great sigh in his breast and arose. "Come, I want to place you in the centre of Schumann's circle, here upon your piano-stool; now lose yourself to me, if you please, but give me something better than the sadness of those eyes for compensation." She touched the keys with a baffling smile. "I will do my best," she said, "but my music is a sort of Fortunatus cap, and it is only when alone, invisible, that I wear it to any purpose."

"Alone!" her words struck through him with a chill. Was he ever to stand outside the circle, catching only the outer waves of harmony that she made? Ah, well, *carpe diem*, and to-morrow is yet to come!

CHAPTER XXV.

FAREWELL.

"Hide me up from my own despair,
And the ghost of a dream I dreamed!"
À l'Entresol.

He went over to where she sat, straying from him afar in some dream-realm of melody. He leaned against the lid of the piano as he had leaned on that other evening, and read in her eyes the same shadow of patient longing and regret. Ah, why did she ever evade him like this, when he stood so near, with his palpable presence and warm human heart overflowing with love for her? why must she escape him to wander through those dreary lands of memory? Dreary they must be, since their shadow was ever so dark in her eyes and on her face. "I have still to-day," he had said, "and to-morrow is not yet come;" then why must he needs forestall the morrow, except that, with the impatience of human love and longing, he could not await the result?

"Why do you look so sad, Amy? Of what are you thinking?"

How very far she must have strayed that his voice should startle her so!

"I have double reason for sadness to-night. My work will seem very solitary after you have left. I do not like to think how I shall miss you."

"Go with me, Amy, will not you? It breaks my heart to leave you. Child, I had not meant to tell you, but I

love you better than my own life,—I think, next to my God. Go with me; do not send me off alone, I cannot bear it." He made a step toward her; tears were in his eyes; his voice was husky and broken. But what is this he sees? The slight figure shrinking *away* from him, pain that is almost horror in the frightened eyes!

"Doctor, Doctor Duncan!" The words rang across his own with an accentuation of keenest surprise and entreaty.

He took her hands in his and led her over to the sofa where they had sat together earlier in the evening; then he sat down beside her, quietly, deliberately, though his face was white, and his hands holding hers had grown cold.

"Have I made a mistake, Amy? do you not, then, care for me?"

"Care for you? I love you dearly, dearly, even better than 'Julee,' but not—not—in *that* way."

Then reading the bitter pain and disappointment in his face, the girl broke into bitter weeping. "I have broken your heart!" she cried, with the *naïvete* of a child; "oh, what will you do?" For to her, whose love was so sacred, so blessed a thing, even amidst the cloud of uncertainty and anguish which enveloped it, the suffering she had unwittingly inflicted seemed too terrible to contemplate.

"Do not," he said, regarding the slight figure by his side and making a motion, which he as speedily checked, to take the sobbing girl in his arms. "Why are you so troubled, Amy? I blame you with nothing."

"Oh, but I have broken your heart. Do you think I cannot see that your lips are twitching, that your face is white? After all you have done for me, to have treated you so!"

"Hush, dear child! has it been your fault? How

could *you* know that I was going to make such a dolt of myself? There, there, little girl, wipe away your tears; my heart is not quite broken,—see!" He smiled—almost his old smile—down into her wet eyes. Oh, finite heart, so near the infinite! "You will still be my good little friend, always my friend, will you not?"

"Your friend!" She flashed him a glance, half indignant, half appealing. "It is giving you a stone when you ask for bread,—but no! I did not *ever* dream that you asked for more. You believe me?"

"How can you ask? You have been loyal in friendship, dear, as I in—love." Then his voice quavered and broke; the sweet pained face glimmered before his eyes through a sudden glamour of tears.

"You have not asked me *why*," she said, after a pause, in a half whisper, "why I cannot love you as you ask." Amy, independent of *les convenances* always, feared least of all misconstruction from this familiar friend.

"It is enough to know that you do not." All the broken sweetness of his dream eked out in those simple words.

"It is your right to know," she said.

He made a gesture of protest. "If it will pain you do not tell me," he said. "I have had no time to realize my disappointment, much less to digest the cause of it. I had grown blind, I believe, else how could I have read so much more than you meant in your tender little helpful ways? It is your nature to be gentle,—gentle to those hungry, ragged children, as well as to me."

"Indeed no!" she cried. "You have given me so much; you have taught me how to be useful, how to be almost content, and I was so grateful to you. I loved you so well, in an honest, friendly way that I did not care to hide. It is my selfishness, after all, that has misled you;

and I gave to you without a thought of any consequence my time, and many of my thoughts, because you modified them and tempered them for so much better uses than I could alone."

He was walking slowly the length of the room, and as he walked it seemed to his disordered fancy that he crushed out of shape with every step some flower of hope that had wafted him a mocking fragrance not longer than an hour ago.

"Will you not listen?" She went over to his side and laid a trembling hand on his arm. "You told me once that I had some sorrow that was making me uneasy and sad: have you forgotten?"

No, he had not forgotten; but he could not for the life of him force the words from his shaking lips. He knew that she loved another, that there was no hope for him; but all the while he had not strangled desire, and while he felt that he would gladly have laid down his life to spare her pain, he knew that to live and see her go to another's arms when his own were aching to hold her would involve a heroism greater than death, more absolute than was in his power now to contemplate.

"Do not tell me now," he said, huskily, holding the little hand in a tight, hard clasp,—"some other time, not now." In another instant he was gone.

She heard his steps receding down the quiet pavement. She threw herself on a sofa, weeping with an *abandon* that had never mitigated her troubles before. He was so good, so noble; he had borne such tender care for her, such unobtrusive, chivalrous devotion, and she must requite him thus. "Oh, why did we ever meet?" she cried. "There are so many women in the world, pure-hearted and good, with hearts free to love him,—why out of all should he have chosen me, who am so utterly another's?"

Thus she rebelled at the inscrutable sequence of events that led to their meeting, as we so often do, in these dim lives of ours, little knowing that what we, for want of a better name, call *chance* is the great motive-power by which God convenes his designs in working out those problems that so pitifully confound our human understandings. It seemed only very cruel, very unjust that he, in his gracious manhood, should mar its purposes by a misplaced affection; that he, so devoted to all the interests of humanity, should suffer such a want through its subtlest influence. She had yet to learn, our Amy, that some souls thrive upon affliction as the food best suited to their spiritual growth, that God of times denies His best-beloved the poor symbols of love upon earth that they may reach after and long for all the more ardently the rich reality to be gained hereafter.

It is very strange, but I think you will bear me out in its truth, that of all the world's passions none other exert such paradoxical influences upon the human heart as love. Transporting to rapture, it also reduces to despair; humanizing a Nero, and inciting a Pericles to war; writing with the same pen epics and tragedies, shouting with the same voice notes of exultation to-day, wailing in a minor key to-morrow; investing the timid maiden with the courage of the martyr, making the strong man tremble, a very coward. And of all its passions through love the world reaps its richest rewards, as it suffers its keenest throes of agony.

"Of all the world's passions, I had rather suffer through love," Doctor Duncan had said to Amy in the early days of their intimacy, "because of all it, alone, attains to perfection in heaven." And the words had held an unconscious prophecy; for he suffered, alas! as he in his strong contented manhood had never dreamed it was in

his heart to suffer, for he might never dare hope to grasp the lovely elusive symbol that is alone merged into the substance when earthly sense and sight are dimmed forever. Love truer, fonder, purer, and for that very trio of sentiment more enduring, than his had never been since the world began.

With the soul of a Christian, he found her gentle virtues answer his every requirement; with the perceptions of an artist, he found his fairest ideal fully realized in her youthful grace and beauty; with the loving, passionate heart of a man, he found in her sympathy and tender loving nature all he could have asked to make his life complete. But his hopes were never to reach fruition, never! The sweet sad eyes were never to kindle with love for him, the gentle heart, infinite, tender, infinitely pitiful to him, as to all the world, would never throb at his coming or beneath the close clasp of his arms. It was desolation all the more complete because until now he had been so blind. She had given him such sweet half-shy sympathy, such shifting blushes; she had not scrupled to let him see how entirely dependent upon him was her comfort in this alien society into which she had been forced. Men of as keen perceptions before him had failed to understand a woman, and it serves to illustrate the rare justice of his character that, in all his pain, he never sought to excuse his folly by attaching blame to her. She was a child, a *belle étoilé*, who had spent all her brief young life among the fresh unhidden beauties of the country. She had nothing to conceal in glance or thought, except, perhaps, the substance of that shadow that made her young life so dark at times; and even that she had not wholly concealed from him. But he had chosen to ignore the clue that he had caught on that first evening of his meeting, or rather he had allowed it to escape him

in the enchanting abstraction of the moment, and now he was to have it thrust upon him, nay, more, he was to follow it through the dark and dreary windings of the labyrinth whither it led. But he did not blame her that he had been deluded by the soft sympathy of her smiles, the sweetness of her glances. He had not loved her so well and known her so little.

* * * * * * * * * *

Several days elapsed before he had the courage to meet her, and Amy wondered sadly if he had gone without bidding her good-by. She searched the papers for tidings of his departure. At last Jacob brought in the card she had been looking for, and she hailed it with a mixed feeling of dread and relief.

"Oh, I am so glad you have come!" she said, when she went to him in the drawing-room. He held her hand in his old kindly grasp, but ah! there were dark shadows beneath the kind gray eyes, and Amy's heart smote her afresh when he spoke.

"That would have meant so much to me this time last week."

He had not meant to make any weak murmur, any idle plaint; but the strong man was weak, and could not reckon surely as of old upon his strength of will to curb unwelcome impulses.

She took a low chair and clasped her hands in her lap with the old gesture of patience and resignation. "And yet I mean it this evening just as I have always meant it," she said.

"Yes, and I thank you; it is something to be your friend."

They were silent then, thinking what they could say to one another with this great barrier between them. His eyes dwelt upon her face with their old lingering

gaze. A wandering sunbeam shot a golden arrow through her hair where she leaned her head against the dark blue velvet of the chair. He drew near to her.

"Amy, I have passed through bitter waters since I saw you; there is small need to tell you that."

At the first sound of his voice she closed her eyes, crushing back the tears with a sob.

"It was so dark at first that I lost sight of all the old landmarks, but *that* could not be for long. Across the waters a Voice called, a Hand was stretched out to help me, and so the worst is over."

The tears were coursing madly now down the white cheeks, though the dark lashes were still closed fast above them. For all answer, she laid her hand on his where it rested on the arm of her chair. She was such a child; she acted but upon the impulse of her pity for him. How could she know that it was a part of the lesson he had set himself to learn when his fingers did not move beneath the light flower-weight of hers, though the blood rushed in a torrent over his pale, stern face.

"The worst is over, Amy, and I am your true friend, ready to do everything but die for you. We do not die for our friends in this practical age, though I question if we do not often find it harder to live when life seems hopeless."

"Oh, if you talk like that you will break my heart," she sobbed. "But life is not hopeless; you are too brave and strong to feel that long. You will find rest in your work,—you said always one might do that. You said you believed, with Schiller, that man could grieve down everything, from the highest to the lowest loss: don't you remember? And you are too *good* to suffer long."

He leaned back in his chair and passed his hand over

his brow. "No, I shall not find life hopeless, little girl; you are right. It is a poor physician who fears to test his own prescriptions, and you were wise to suggest the use of them. But about being too good to suffer, dear child, you are altogether wrong in the abstract; putting ourselves entirely out of the question, virtues never yet won for a man immunity from the suffering incidental to his kind. Phidias's fidelity did not save him from a prison; the heroic qualities of Phocian the Good did not spare him the fatal draught when the fickle Athenians met in the Assembly. I disclaim all fellowship with martyrs, Amy; it is only what thousands have endured before me, though I am prone to wonder if ever lover had more to relinquish than I."

"But you will find another,—some one far more worthy,—with a heart free to give——"

"But," he interrupted her, "it is you, not the free-hearted one, I love, you who have no heart to give me!"

"No; in the sense you mean, I cannot give you love; but esteem, confidence, and reverence more than I ever yet gave to human creature, if that could but satisfy you——"

He interrupted her. Ah, what will not a man do for the life of his life, love, that divine gift that comes to so few to know and hold aright? His eyes were shining, the color was warm on his brow.

"You mean could I be satisfied with that much from you?" he said rapidly, with eager hesitation. "Oh, my darling, I will be satisfied with the merest liking only, for if you gave yourself to me, surely in time the stronger feeling would follow."

But he had mistaken her meaning. "No, no!" she cried. "I could never be your wife, because, because I

belong to another, and though we may never meet in this world still I belong to *him!*"

She waited for him to speak, but he did not. The utter death of hope in his heart after that brief relapse left him powerless to struggle even.

"We belonged to each other from the first," she continued, with a mantling blush on her cheeks and a widened splendor in her eyes that he had never before seen there. "We did not think about it any more than we thought of the air we breathed, because we were so essential to each other, and so congenial in every thought and taste." She was leaning toward him, speaking as though to her own heart. "For one year we were together, when he angered his father, my uncle, and he left. But I can say no more. Others are involved from this point, himself most of all; but there are reasons why he may never come back again, never! He is more sinned against than sinning, though he is not guiltless. And he said when he left that when his father came to forgive him I should call him back; but I do not know where to find him, I do not even dream, neither Jacob Martin nor I; and uncle *has* forgiven him, I am sure, though he has never spoken his name, but he longs for him, as we all do, only he is very proud and will not humble himself to admit it."

"And why have you not heard in all this while? Surely he has communicated with you."

"Wait before you judge him," and Amy covered her face with her hands for a moment; when she lifted it again Doctor Duncan was shocked at the whiteness and the vague terror upon it.

"Do not speak of it if it trouble you like this." And he thought, "How she must love this man, that the mere memory of him has power to move her like this!"

"You have not heard all; and I owe it to you to tell you all." Then faithfully she recounted to him that terrible tragedy that had sent the last of the Cheswicks a wanderer upon the face of the earth.

"And it is for him you are waiting, for him? O Amy, what hope?" The hydra had revived to die again.

"Oh, you do not know all, I have not told you: listen!" And she leaned nearer, until her head almost touched his shoulder, while she whispered a few words in his ear.

The sunlight had long ago died from the windows of the square. A servant came in to replenish the grate and light the chandelier. He looked with stolid wonder at the white face of his young lady when the springing gas-jets threw it in pallid relief against the velvet of her chair, and at Doctor Duncan leaning back against the ottoman so silently.

"I have opened my heart to you," she said, "but that is because I would save you from further harm that I might unwittingly deal you. You see now how impossible it is for me to think of anything but how to find and save him. Consciousness of wrong less cruel has made the strongest reckless before him, and his was a nature to loathe the simplest dereliction from right. It is no vain quest."

"No, it is no vain quest," he echoed. "I thank you for your candor. Let it go, that broken dream of mine; never remember it. I am the better for having dreamed it, I know; for it is only through actual experience that we grow to appreciate the troubles of our fellow-creatures. What does he look like, this lost love of yours? How should I know him if we were to meet?"

"Wait." she cried, "let me bring Aunt Bab, and we will go together and show you his portrait. It is an old one, painted when he was but seventeen, and uncle had it sent up from Cheswick for a surprise to me. Do you

remember the evening you took me to see the Lorraine? You found me crying: it was because I was so happy that uncle gave it to me, because it said plainer than words how he longed to have him back."

Miss Bab came at Amy's call, and together they went up to Amy's room. It hung above the chimney-piece, and beneath it was a dish of flowers, mignonette and sweet heliotrope. The girl blushed as the gentleman touched the flowers with his fingers and bent his head to inhale their fragrance, but the tears came when he lifted his head, for his kind eyes were so sad, and they said plainer than any words that she lavished her loving tender little offices upon this dumb canvas, while he was fain to content himself with her friendship.

"It is very like him, except that, of course, he looked older," she said.

"It is Rick though, all over!" cried old Miss Bab, with a very perceptible sniffle and choking of the voice. "Does the doctor know about Rick, Amy?"

But the doctor covered her confusion. "Miss Randolph has told me his sad history, Miss Cheswick, and I wanted to carry away with me some tangible likeness of him. Who knows but we shall meet, and it would be well for him to know how he is loved and longed for at home."

"Amy, do you think it at all likely? say, my dear, do you think Doctor Duncan would know Rick even should he meet him?" The keen old eyes were dim; they looked from one to the other in a wavering, unsteady way that was very touching.

"The world is wide, Miss Cheswick, they say,"—he spoke in strong steady tones,—"but I have not found it so wide but that we are constantly being jostled against the people we imagined the farthest away. Like the colored

glass bits of a kaleidoscope, we are all shaken together one time or another. It is not improbable, believe me."

She laid a hand on his sleeve when he was about to go. "He wore a ring; you might probably detect him by it," she said, the color warm on her face, "for I fancy he wears it yet,—a brown intaglio cut into the figure of Nemesis, with a helm in one hand and a wheel in the other. The setting is plain and heavy, and the figure I am sure you could not mistake."

"I shall remember."

Then he bade her farewell, lingeringly, as Sir Siegfried might have done when, looking down into Rienhild's eyes, he prayed that Odin would bring him to bask in their sweet light again. Only for Siegfried there was answering love in the lady's glance, and for him, while much of pity and sympathy and sweet entreaty, there was no love. *That* was given to him beneath whose portrait she offered up the incense of her heliotrope and mignonette. Ah, well! love, earthly love, is but a symbol after all, and he who would fain grasp the reality must be content ofttimes to let the symbol go.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"ROSELEIN."

"Rosebud fair! Rosebud fair!
Can it be that thorns are there?"
SCHUMANN.

"I VENTURE to say that a woman wrote it."

It was a man who spoke, his legs producing that very elegant angle apparently so conducive to the bodily ease of the stronger sex. Whenever I see a pair of masculine limbs so disposed, I am reminded with a slight tinge of mocking humor, perhaps, of the classic source from whence the indispensable gear of said members has drawn its distinguishing title. Planter of the Lion forsooth! Think of that, ye lovers of classic traditions, and wonder at nothing in an age like this that corrupts St. Mark's lofty escutcheon into the "pantaloon" of the tailor's model!

"I venture to say that a woman wrote it."

"What are the indications?" asked his companion, taking his cigar from his mouth and knocking the ashes lightly off into the bowl.

The first speaker whiffed contemplatively at a huge meerschaum, and shook his head with an air of deliberate conviction. Then he settled a pair of violet-tinted glasses that he wore more comfortably on the bridge of his nose, and between vigorous whiffs at his pipe proceeded to enumerate the "indications" as they existed in his mind.

"In the first place, the style is diffuse; in the second, there prevails a Tennysonian use of adjectives; and in

the third, to sum the whole, the observations are striking, but the theories, for the most part, are faulty."

"I don't agree with you there; I find the theories fully sustained by the observations. It is not a failure by any means."

"I should say not; but there is very little of the dust of toil perceptible in its pages."

"And that is why I find it such pleasant reading. Defend me from a novel that undertakes to serve you a dish of logic and metaphysics and theology in a single *olla podrida!*"

"The critics are divided, though those highest in repute give it some decided praise. 'Roselein,'—by the way, a very fanciful *nom de plume*, one of Schumann's German songs, is it not?—'Roselein' has quite enough encouragement from the critics, I should say, to induce her to try her pen at another venture."

"I don't doubt she'll try again; women are not easily daunted."

The first speaker laughed, bringing his legs down from their height and rubbing them a little as he rose from his easy-chair.

"You laugh more than usual to-night, my good fellow. What has happened?—

> "'The older that one grows
> Inclines us more to laugh than scold.'"

"You will do well to bear in mind the old proverb, my good fellow: '*Ce n'est pas être bien-aisé que de rire!*'"

> "'But laughter
> Leaves one so doubly serious shortly after.'"

"What a queer fellow you are, Cheston; you have a quotation in readiness for every occasion."

Cheston arose, knotting the cord of his dressing-gown

about his waist, and going over to the remote end of the apartment, where stood an organ with scattered sheets of music on the cover.

"Don't let me bore you, Duncan," he said; "when you're tired consider yourself dismissed." With which he sat down to the organ.

The room was evidently a work-shop of some sort, though it bore indications of refined and cultivated tastes. Beside the organ there was a piano, a much-worn Chickering; on the piano ledge a metronome, that had been set in motion, ticked with the regularity of an old-fashioned eight-day clock. On the table there were Bertini Methods and Harmony Instructors and thorough-bass primers lying about, and an immense blackboard, covering a wide space of the wall behind the piano, indicated by its illustrations, from the common chord up to the chord of the extreme sharp sixth, that pupils of different grades had demonstrated thereupon. One or two good paintings, a crayon sketch, and a subject in water-colors bore the blackboard company, and a wagon of cigars and rack of pipes on the mantel bore evidence to its being something more than the mere *bottega* after all.

The occupant of the apartments, he who sat lost in the harmonies he was evolving, oblivious of the fact that his friend had finished his cigar and "considered himself dismissed," was of a tall, well-built figure, rather pale as to complexion, with short, dark-brown hair, showing a decided disposition to curl at the ends, a broad forehead square above the brows, a slender nose given to dilating at the nostrils, a mouth of which little can be said, for it was nearly concealed by the long brown moustache, but the chin was square and firm, and the head well poised on a column-like throat that, with all its strength, was white and well shaped as a woman's. He played from score for

a full hour, carefully, as one who studies with an aim not only to retain but to impart, then he went over to the blackboard, wiped off the crayon-marks, and wrote some comprehensive exercises in sequences; after which, with an exclamation of relief, he repaired to a small room adjoining, dressed and went out.

We find him later being ushered into the drawing-room of a Fifth Avenue edifice, where, beneath a chandelier with its myriad jets, sat a lady reading. She was dressed in a curious foreign fashion, and all the glow of the gas-light could reveal no fault in those perfect features; she was absolutely "a thing of beauty."

She extended her hand to him as he entered: "Ah, monsieur, you are kind, and so punctual! See, I have been reading the notices of 'Alida.' Sit down, will you, and tell me, has 'Roselien' fared ill or well at the hands of the critics? I feel an unaccountable interest in that little book, possibly because some of my happiest hours have passed in the land of the heroine; and they say she has taken for her model Giorgione's beautiful wife!"

"If he had one," supplied Cheston, taking a chair near her; "there are doubts of the fact, you know."

But she shook her head with a quizzical smile. "Indeed Byron was not the only one who saw her at the Pitti,—I did myself, monsieur."

"Monsieur" bowed and tried to look convinced. "Well, let us have the critiques."

She read them one by one, the flickering color coming and going on her cheeks. Cheston watched her narrowly behind his glasses, a covert smile curling his lips more than once. She drew a deep breath as she finished.

"I should think that mass of contradictory opinions would leave poor 'Roselien' sadly *désorienté*, though there is a judicious mingling of the sweet with the bitter."

"If she will accept some of the bitter and shape her next venture upon its suggestions, I think her triumph will be assured."

"What do you mean?" she asked. In her imperious sway she was not used to much that savored of contradiction.

"I mean, to speak in your favorite dialect, that 'Roselien' wrote 'Alida' *les bras croisés*, as it were. There is none of the deliberation of conviction in its pages. Pretty and graceful it is, abounding in redundant descriptions and fanciful theories, but of thoughtful, experimental judgment there is little. Perhaps the writer has lived too easily to have thought very deeply; it may be that 'Roselien' cannot claim the poet's countersign,—'I have suffered.' Your favorite Lamartine says, 'Man is like a tree that must be shaken to make yield its fruits,' and you know, do not you, that in ancient days on a certain Grecian island the cruel people put out the eyes of the nightingales, because, blind, their notes were so much sweeter and purer? I think the blind poet of Chios had scarcely sung so divinely had the seven cities contended for his birthplace during his lifetime, but roaming from land to land, denied entrance through any of the gates that in a few short years were wrangling for the coveted honor of being his birthplace, he made his genius greater than a kingdom, and became the arbiter of thought and feeling, aye, even impulse itself, in those years that he owned no resting-place for his weary feet. Ah, it is something to strive in the face of such contending forces, but, *les bras croisés*, what can one expect to accomplish that will endure?"

"It is very amusing to note the contradictions in these critiques," she said, ignoring his enthusiasm, though it was very evidently not wasted upon her perception only.

"Here is Monsieur Le Gentilhomme, who declares 'Alida' to be free from the commonplace at least, with just sufficient depth of plot to be interesting without fatiguing. *Au contraire,* Monsieur Le Bas Bleu deplores the exceedingly commonplace details of the work, and denounces the plot as deplorably shallow, and the incidents unnatural and strained. Here is one who thinks 'no one will open the book without finishing it,' and another 'ventures to predict a modicum of the dish that the author has served quite enough for any but the most ostrich-like digestion.' But of all there is none worth resenting except this. Were I 'Roselein,' *this* critic should not escape me," and she opened a damp sheet that he had not seen and read at length therefrom.

"Have you read the book?" she asked, when she had finished, turning full upon him her flashing dark eyes. "Then what do you think of a criticism like that, in which incident, to say nothing of motives, are so distorted that you find it difficult to even recognize them? Critics should deal justly if severely. Here are sentiments for which the author is made responsible by the use of inverted commas that could not be found in the length or breadth of the volume. The characters are made to play parts foreign to the aim of the author, and the whole *motif* of the story is destroyed by this false system of distortion and reversion. That I call *malice prepense,* —worse, for enough of the leading characteristics of style and subject is retained to mislead the careless reader, while the deductions are wholly unsubstantiated by the premises. Do you remember the parson's text in Tennyson's 'Grandmother?'—'A lie that is all a lie can be met with and fought outright, but a lie that is half a truth is a harder matter to fight.'"

"I agree with you," said Cheston; "that critic is

doubtless of Sydney Smith's opinion: it does not answer to read a book before reviewing it, because one is apt to be prejudiced thereby. Or perhaps, like the musical critic, who, upon being hauled over the coals the other day for finding so much fault with singers and composers, major and minor, answered, 'Well, sir, what am I to do? they don't consider a critique worth reading if some one isn't picked to pieces: we critics can't exercise justice and enjoy popularity and good pay at the same time.'"

"*Eh bien!*" she said, sweeping the papers aside with an impatient gesture, "to those who write *les bras croisés* it should not matter, but to those who bind up the hopes, the aspirations, and the work of years with the leaves of their book it seems a cruel shame that a hasty, ill-judged pen should blast them all with a single stroke."

The gentleman adjusted his glasses and looked with tolerant amusement at the indignant face with its imperious eyes. Such eyes! dark and deep as mountain tarns and troubled to-night, just as the tarns might be under the sudden lashing of a summer gust. Surely there was nothing that had power to disturb them long. The brow above them was too unshadowed to have known aught of trouble or care, the arch curve of the lips altogether too unbroken and joyous.

"Don't be too hard on the critics," he said; "literature is a business like anything else. The tradesman has no right to blame a public that will not patronize him."

"Ah, but if the public traduce and misname his wares, what then? Criticism that is fair should profit one. Do you think I should care aught for that if I were 'Roselein'?" And she read, "Such stories as 'Alida' are false in sentiment, dismal in themselves, and utterly without excuse for being."—"Not a whit! But it is the wilful

misrepresentation and distortion of motives and theories that a conscientious writer resents more than the severest judgment."

"Ah, my lady 'Roselein,' the critics should hear your vindication of 'Alida!'" Then he laughed at her confusion, for the brilliant shifting color told him that he had guessed her secret. "Your indignant ardor betrayed you," he said.

"No, it was your curiosity did that."

"Well, what's against it? We have Dr. Johnson's leave to be curious; does not he dignify it by the distinguishing epithet 'thirst of the soul'?"

"Yes, and if my memory does not play me false, he further adds that we taste every draught with delight, *no matter how insipid*, by which that thirst may be allayed. Yes, I wrote it, I will admit, as Byron did his 'Corsair,' *con amore*, and very much from existence, and yet M. Le Bas Bleu regrets that it is not true to life, while my critic who denounces it *tout à fait* says 'such messes are rarely to be met with outside the novelist's cook-shop.' Too bad, isn't it, when all my best scenes are from life? and if there is a fault, to my mind, in the whole book, it is that I have drawn too slightly upon my imaginative powers."

"I had a sailor uncle, dead long years ago," said Cheston, "who had lived through a dozen ordinary lifetimes, counting lives by adventures. He could tell of marvellous phenomena witnessed in Southern seas under the white fires of the Ship and the Crown. In the latter days of his life he became a contributor to several periodicals, and I once heard him say that the narratives containing his actual experiences were often politely declined on account of their improbability, while his ideal sketches sold best. Nothing seems so strange, so unreasonable to me as the incredulity of the world on subjects of this

nature, when not one of us but carries in his life hidden mysteries that would put to the blush the wildest romance. I suppose it is upon the same principle that Turner's subjects are found fault with so often. He dares to put the bright blue and gold of the sky, the crimson of the sunset, the emerald green of the grass upon his canvas in the colors of nature; they hurt the eye brought so directly within its range of vision, gathered in so small a compass. So we do not enjoy our private follies, our stupid blunders, or our heart's best feelings, so mercilessly scrutinized and analyzed and held up to public view. For we are sure to find some one *en rapport* with our experiences. It is humiliating when we consider that no new phase of fact or feeling is left us to work upon. All the ground has been beaten before us by somebody else."

She turned her arch face upon him, dauntless and laughing. "Nothing new in fact or feeling, but much in deed and disclosure," she said, in her high silvery voice, in which mockery was predominant now; "for the Pythian cave is turned into a cow-house, and the Barberini cameo dissolved into blue and white glass. Fancy the feelings of the antiquarians and archæologists. One can never appreciate his own blessings until he compares them with those of others more unfortunate. I was silly enough to suppose that, because I had seen sheep grazing on the tombs of Æsietes and Antilochus, and bowed to the Shadow of the Brocken, that the world might like to hear of it. That episode with the Waynode in the Mussulman's house, with its painted ceilings and wainscoting, particularly pounced upon by the critics as too altogether improbable for credence, actually *happened to me*. See, I have these beads for a souvenir of my visit." She reached out her hand to an *étagère* near.

"Here they are, ninety-nine in all; a rosary, we would say here, but in the East they call it a *comboloio*. And I came near losing my life that day. It was curiosity that tempted me to venture in. 'Thirst of the soul?' not a bit of it,—a sheer sense of delight in prying into the forbidden,—my inheritance from our first mother, which I must admit, *bongré malgré*. Had it not been for that benevolent Waynode, I should have been a sacrifice to the Giaours long ago instead of sitting here to tell the tale. He piloted me out safely, but, like Gladys, 'I had seen the island,' which is to say the seraglio."

"And did you flirt with the Waynode, as 'Alida' did, and leave him with a pang in his Giaour breast because 'a dog of a Christian's daughter was so fair'?"

"Oh, of course that was imaginative entirely, and my Waynode—'Alida's,' I mean—was intensely idealized. The original was a very ugly yellow old fellow."

"But your heorine *is* a little vain?"

"What would you expect, sir, considering she is a woman? I always suspect a woman who disavows a taste for dress and those necessary adjuncts that add so to my sex's charms. Talk of beauty unadorned! the dictum is threadbare. There are some women so well endowed by nature that they need little aid from art, but that little is very necessary, and there are some reigning queens of beauty in the drawing-rooms who would positively give you a scare at *déjeuner*."

"There you have the advantage of us."

"And I have no doubt you envy us it very heartily. Isn't it Suetonius who tells us that there was no honor conferred upon Julius Cæsar which he seized so eagerly as his crown of laurel leaves,—*not* because it was dear to his ambition as an emblem of his civic triumphs, but because it would cover the baldness of his cranium? And what a vain old

fellow he was with his '*veni, vidi, vici!*' and his 'fear not, you carry Cæsar!' though he had quite enough to make him conceited, I grant you. Oh, the world stands still in individual characteristics, though it undoubtedly moves in Galileo's sense. It is refreshing to read, in this age of progress, when the hue and cry is so deafening against the follies and vanities of women, how that old Florentine, Agnolo, four hundred years ago, made his silly wife cry because he took from her her powders and cosmetics and locked them up in one of his big painted *cassoni;* while the poor little goose was forced to carry a sallow complexion to confront the raillery of the donnas. Sir Agnolo is dead four hundred years ago, but we still have our powders and cosmetics, our *crême d'la Imperatrice,* and almond paste."

"Not you!" He was moved to the exclamation out of sheer wonder.

She lifted her mocking wild-rose face and let the golden rays from the chandelier bathe its every feature with light.

"I? oh no, not yet. I have no need, but sooner or later I shall, of course, only my Sir Agnolo shall not need to storm and exercise his authority, and jingle the keys of his big *cassoni,* because I shall do it judiciously and *à huis clos!*" Then she went over to the piano and struck the opening chords of one of Schumann's most exquisite melodies:

> "Rosebud fair! Rosebud fair!
> Can it be that thorns there are?"

The gay mocking voice carolled with the free joyous melody of the lark escaping in the early dawn from the dark shadows of earth to the fair pearly tint of the summer sky.

"Sleeping by a shady stream,
Dreaming once a happy dream,
On a summer's morn of gold
A thornless rose I saw unfold,
And I plucked and held it close,
Sweet, loving, thornless rose."

Now a nightingale seemed singing in the dark, for the strains had grown low and plaintive:

"I awoke and gazed around:
Where was then the rose I found?
Saw, indeed, the roses there,
Only thornless none there were.
And the streamlet at me smiled,
Be not by such thoughts beguiled;
Mark it well, oh, youth forlorn,
Ne'er was rose without a thorn,
Without a thorn!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

"HONI SOIT QUI MAL Y PENSE."

"I worked with patience, which means almost power."
MRS. BROWNING.

WHEN Doctor Duncan came home from his ramblings in the Old World, nearly three years after parting with Amy, he went back to his old work in Baltimore. The house in the square was shut up, and his sister Helen could give him little information concerning Mr. Cheswick's intentions. "I should not be at all surprised," she said, "if it ended in their settling at Cheswick again."

Foreign air and scenery had not exerted the beneficial effect that his friends had hoped for, and it was some time before he could bring himself to admit that the old active life must be given up, and further measures used to entice back the health that seemed slowly but surely escaping him. He made another trip across the sea and joined his uncle and "Julee," as he had done before. Together they came back to the States, and he was made by their urgent request a member of the family. He was stronger, in every way improved, but the old suffocating sensation returned at times, and he knew that he needed to be careful of himself if he would escape his inheritance of what "Julee" had once lightly said to Amy was the taint in their blood,—a predisposition to troubles of the heart.

He had not been long in New York when he was attracted by the organist at St. Aloysius's, both on account of his music and because the physique of the man in-

terested him. Hunting him out he found him occupying apartments in the city and teaching music to a class of young men and women who were glad to avail themselves of prices less formidable than customary. With the kindliness of his nature, Doctor Duncan sought to be of use to this stranger, discerning the breeding and bearing of a gentleman in his manner and person, and commiserating the loneliness of his situation, for of friends or companions he had none. Soon there began to exist a warm personal attachment between the two, for Cheston, always reserved to strangers, relented to this genial doctor, who seemed himself in need of companionship. The teacher's musical talents and capacities afforded Doctor Duncan constant recreation, for, educated but in one sense to music, he still enjoyed it comprehensively, as a connoisseur, without deferring to his palate, can be trusted to detect the genuineness of the brands on his wines. He had read the lives of the masters, he had heard the finest music of his time; he had sat enraptured under Liszt, and had come from Bayreuth in disgust that "the music of the future" should charm him so little. He was a cultivated, appreciative listener, and could have detected a false modulation with the quickness of a professor, though he could not have made a correct one in a single key if his life had been at stake. And he supplied to Cheston the lack which is the saddest a man's life can know.

For years this tall, pale, broad-shouldered music-teacher had worked alone, always with indomitable perseverance, determination, and zeal, but *alone*. Not a single voice in all the hurrying, bustling city to say to him, "How are you? I am glad to see you." Not a single threshold in all that babel of streets and thoroughfares that he was free to cross with the familiar step of one who is expected within, and for whom a welcome awaits. Some years

back he had come to this great city, friendless, unknown, with a very scant purse, and nothing to depend upon but his own steady determination to win. It had been slow work, step by step, one rung after the other of the long ladder to climb, and even now he was not near the top. Hope sank very low in his breast often; discouragements prevailed, and fatigue and even want. Aye, he had known what it was to go to bed hungry, hurrying by the bakeries, because he dared not tempt his hungry pangs with a glance at the array of rolls and loaves and cakes,—enough to feed a multitude, but none for him, because there was not one penny to make music against another in his empty pockets. Step by step, from errand lad in a huge piano-factory to pumice-polisher, until one day, forgetting himself, and beguiled into the indulgence by the silence of the show-room and the splendor of the instrument, but just set upon its legs, he let his fingers loose upon the key-board, and forgot his loneliness and his poverty in the glad free strains that filled the great hall, in which was no memory of hunger, of pain or bitter want, but ineffable delight and freedom and companionship with all that was holy and high. He sat in a magic circle: the great harp-shaped thing of wood and iron and wire and pearl seemed possessed with a spirit of flesh and blood. It writhed and shrieked and wailed defiance of the prison-house that bound it, wailed and shrieked until, as when exhausted, resignation came to its aid, and after a season hope, anon peace, and in a grand climax of harmony there was to be read the subdued soul's reachings after something better and purer and more enduring than anything earth has to give!

But the pianos, the organs and melodeons of the show-room had not been the only auditors of the pumice-polisher's recital. A young lady with a wild-rose complexion

and the proudest of bright eyes had stood near, screened by organ-pipes, and had heard the whole wonderful performance. "He is the very man we want," she said to her father, when later she recounted her adventure. "You must engage him at once; why, the creature has genius!"

So it happened that the parishioners at St. Aloysius's were electrified next Sabbath at the strains that greeted them from the organ-loft. That was the first reward of his patient labor. Mr. Vosburgh, the German banker on Wall Street, instigated by his daughter, went to the new organist and inquired if he could do anything for him before he left on his biennial tour to Europe. And then it was that Cheston fumbled in his inner vest-pocket for the only reference he possessed, handing it to the merchant-prince with a sort of trepidation in the eyes, well veiled by the tinted violet glasses.

"I should like to get a class in music, sir, so that I might stop work in the factory. If you could suggest the names of those who would be likely to care for instruction, I should be very grateful."

"Bless me! this is dated years back! Why did you not bring it straight to me when you first came here? Any one could have directed you to Vosburgh on Wall Street. And only a month ago I needed a clerk. Well, I can't do anything of that sort now. But I can put you in the way of a class; only you can't get professors' prices unless you can show your Leipzic diploma."

So that had come about also, and there Cheston had stood for a while, neither advancing nor receding, working no more patiently nor faithfully than he had worked at the piano-factory, but with much more delight and congeniality in his labor. The remuneration he derived from his class, and his organist's salary, to which was added on

alternate Sabbaths his post as tenor in a West End choir, whose leader had been attracted by the rare tone and timbre of his voice, enabled him to live at least in comfort, with no carping care where the next meal was to come from or the wherewithals to renew his constantly recurring needs.

Doctor Duncan and the music-master became fast friends. They went out much together, for as Cheston's resources increased he did not deny himself any opportunity that he could consistently use for furthering his experience and improvement in the profession he had chosen to adopt.

"You will make your mark on the age, Cheston," Doctor Duncan had said, not many weeks before, when, at a concert at Chickering Hall, the music-teacher who could boast of no Conservatory prize astonished his audience with the proficiency of his class. Critical and musical New York was forced to notice the persistent though gradual success of the stranger. But nothing as yet had come of it all, except that Doctor Duncan had ventured to take him to see his cousin "Julee," who, fresh home from Europe, with innumerable cases of Worth's costumes, and the wafted odor of conquests and refused titles attending her every foot-fall, was at present the fashion in the city of the Knickerbockers. "Julee" extended to him the right hand of fellowship at once, for she had made a venture of her own, the sly young creature, and who will say that a fellow-feeling does not make us wondrous kind? Besides, did not she recognize in him the factory-man for whom she had secured the organist's stool at St. Aloysius's, and what woman ever ceases to feel kindly toward one whom she has served, the latent possibility of further service warming her interest toward him? And, away back of that, were those clairvoyant eyes of "Julee's" deceived by the dark brown of the

close-cut locks, the moustache-hidden mouth, the violet-tinted spectacles, or the changes that the years might make in a man's face and figure? Not in the least.

When he returned the clasp of that kind little hand, and looked into those lamp-like flashing eyes, demanding imperiously, as of yore, the choicest and the rarest of life's *vin mousseux*, did he even faintly imagine that she was saying in that audacious young heart of hers,—

"Ah, my hero of the Tristia, have you come to take amends for your stolen volume? But why do you hide your handsome eyes behind *lunettes*, and color your hair genista-brown?"

He did not indeed, for then would "Julee," with her lovely arch face and exquisite figure, always draped in the most ravishing of Parisian costumes, have assumed the proportions of a lion in his path.

When it was a fully recognized fact that Miss Vosburgh was affable to the organist of St. Aloysius's, the quondam pumice-polisher in S——'s piano-factory, then indeed society found it high time to remonstrate. It was enough that Doctor Duncan, descended on the distaff side from that sturdy old stock that had made Plymouth historical, and able to count his ancestors with tolerable exactness from at least the landing of the "Mayflower,"—it was enough that he should pander to the dilettante tastes of this too-aspiring young man and tempt him into rising above his level; but that Miss Vosburgh, always the haughtiest young aristocrat in the city, whose foreign blood and ancestry and foreign experience gave her a certain right to queen it over the circle she led when "at home," that Miss Vosburgh, who, it was not to be denied, presumed somewhat upon her inherited supremacy of intellect that in centuries past had given to her mother's land the renaissance of art and literature, that she should

smile upon this nameless person, and, in her audacious, dauntless style, even force those of her class to receive him as an equal, was quite too much to endure. For it had come to pass that Miss Vosburgh had given a *musicale*, in which Cheston bore the lion's share as musician and guest; in which she had leaned on his arm down the length of her father's drawing-room and presented him individually to all the *célèbres* of the evening.

If society had known how *blasé* already of its scant politeness was this stranger in the few times he had met it, how entirely indifferent to its verdict, it would have made no difference, except in the nature of its comment, for then indeed would Gotham have found it hard to realize the ingratitude and heresy of such sentiments. But he did not know, this hard-working, patient music-teacher, as he demonstrated "discords by suspension" and cadences in major and minor modes, and wrote T. S. after passages for refractory scholars, and sat late into the "wee sma'" hours, figuring score and evolving harmonies in his brain. And if he had known, would not he have smiled with fine scorn, that he in whose veins ran the blood of heroes and cavaliers should be subjected to such comment as this? Though, in sober second thought, would not he have excused the defensive position of Mrs. Grundy, seeing that to her he was but the unknown music-master, the whilom errand-boy at S——'s factory, and have gone back to his work, only thankful that he found safe footing on this brink of a perilous precipice?

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AN INVITATION.

"It must be allowed that as a man you are highly respectable!"
HANS ANDERSEN.

MISS VOSBURGH sat in her morning-room, with her writing-desk in her lap,—a square little contrivance of ebony and gold with many curious compartments. On a table at her elbow lay a number of promiscuous sheets, very much resembling orchestra score; and to these Miss Vosburgh referred from time to time, humming the bass in a musical undertone, and beating the time with her pencil on her smooth white forehead. There was nothing of the professional writer about "Julee." You might see at a glance that her work was done, as Cheston had suspected, "with folded hands." She lay back in a deep crimson chair, with her desk on her knee, and scribbled with a gum-topped pencil, her pretty fingers thereby escaping the corroding influences of ink-stains, though, if scientists are not mistaken, she ran frequent risk of being poisoned from the recklessness with which she applied the refractory metallic tip to her pretty red lips. Miss Vosburgh boasted that she only wrote when the "afflatus" was upon her. She knew nothing from experience of long dark days in which benumbed fingers indited passage after passage strained from an utterly benumbed imagination; nothing at all of the polite "respectfully declined" that attend so many luckless manuscripts on their homeward flight. For in this venture, as in every one of her bright

young life, she had found the most inspiring encouragement and success. No sooner was it an established fact that the banker's daughter was the author of "Alida," than the graceful translations, the pungent and witty essays, the fanciful foreign sketches found a wide and ready market.

It is true that she had found the roses of the *literati* not altogether thornless, but what need to grasp the thorns? How could they sting if one handled them cautiously? Nay, she had seen thorns put to pretty uses before now, as observe the basket on her boudoir table, made of thorns, long, dark-brown, and glossy, with each cruel point crowned by a scarlet bead.

After some hours of meditative scribbling the scores were pushed aside, the desk transferred to the table, and "Julee," sinking back into the depths of her crimson chair, allowed herself to lapse into the fairy realm of dreamland. As she lay there what a picture she made of ease and beauty and "fair *fulfilled* prophecies!" What a smooth triumphant thing was life to this girl, with her imperious shining eyes, her warm impulses, and her fine æsthetic tastes! But her dreams were waking ones after all, for as the *portière* was swept aside she opened her eyes and looked up with a smile at the intruder.

"Mrs. Herndon! you were kind to come so soon; take that easy-chair."

"And what did you want with me, Julia! I have scarcely a moment of my own nowadays. Child, how well you look!"

"The usual reward fashion offers her votaries," said Julia, answering, it is needless to inform you, the second clause of her friend's speech. "I have a favor to ask of you."

"And I a lecture to deliver."

"*Eh bien!* I shall make my request first. Will you invite a friend of mine to your *musicale* next week?"

"His name, my dear Julia?"

"Ah, but I want *carte blanche* to bring whom I choose."

"It is the organist of St. Aloysius's?"

"Yes."

"Well, it was of him I wished to speak to you. Do you know, Julia, that all New York begins to couple your names? Of what is your papa thinking to allow such a thing?"

"Papa has always conceded to me my right to choose my own associates."

"But of him you know absolutely nothing."

"Except that he is a gentleman and Douglass's best friend."

"But, Julia, you are seen together everywhere,—in the Park, at the Academy,—everywhere but *in society:* that looks wrong."

"It is for you to remove that last stricture and make it look right."

"I would do much for you, Julia, but scarcely that."

Julia laughed, making a supreme effort to command her rising anger, for Mrs. Herndon was a dear friend of her dead mother, and a woman for whom she entertained a sincere affection. "Ah, well, no matter. I overrated your independence, that is all; but I thought you stood on too firm a base to fear the petty jostlings of society. No doubt you are wiser to wait until he grows famous and the fashion, like Raymond, the artist, and Dubbins, the author, though we all know who their grandfathers were, and that Dubbins's father was a small grocer on Sloman Street only a very few years ago. I was foolish to suppose that Mr. Cheston, a polished gentleman, a genius,

and the most conscientious worker I ever knew, could retrieve, in the eyes of society, the *faux pas* of having polished piano-cases in S——'s factory."

"You are severe, Julia." The lady looked uncomfortable under the sarcasm of those high silvery tones. "Mr. Cheston may be a gentleman,—I am quite willing to believe that he is,—but, all the same, he is outside the pale of our world, and I fancied you were an ardent disciple of the law of *noblesse oblige.*"

"You are right,"—"Julee's" eyes flashed,—"and in my friend whom you refuse to patronize I offer a superb interpretation of that much-abused term '*noblesse.*' But you are wiser to wait."

* * * * * * * * *

Late in the evening of that same day, Doctor Duncan opened the door of his friend's apartments and went over to where in the dim twilight he sat, like Jamblicus of old, evoking gods of peace from the clear rippling waters of melody. The music ceased with a crash. The organist renewed his glasses, which had been lying on the ledge, and looked up into his friend's face inquiringly.

"Strange things happen," said Duncan, in the tone of one who soliloquizes, and as he spoke he felt in the inner pocket of his coat, where lay a little white letter that the Southern mail had brought him. "Strange things happen, though this, no doubt, will be a realism to you," and he drew from the same pocket a broad, silver-edged envelope,—"an invitation to Mrs. Herndon's *musicale* for Wednesday evening. Now, how fares your prophecy?—

> "'In the dust lies genius and glory,
> Only every-day talent will pay.'

I tell you genius is going to enjoy an apotheosis if Mrs.

Herndon takes you in hand: she never does things by halves."

"And she is Miss Vosburgh's best friend, I think I have heard you say?" There was a pecular smile in the eyes of the quondam "polisher" that did not bode well for the acceptance of the invitation.

When his friend left he turned on the gas. At his feet lay a little white envelope; he stooped for it and read the address: "Doctor Douglass Duncan." Evidently the doctor had dropped it when he drew Mrs. Herndon's invitation from his inner pocket. He would put it by and give it to him in the morning; but he sat a full hour, motionless, with the letter in his hand, and when he went over to his chamber to dress for an engagement, his white face in the glass gave him a shock.

* * * * * * * * *

"Julia," said her cousin, late that night, intercepting her on her way from the carriage to her dressing-room, "I have heard from your friend, Miss Randolph."

"Julee's" bright face looked somewhat weary, for she had undergone a fatiguing ordeal that evening, *célèbre* as she was and wildly coveted for every entertainment. But it flashed a beaming glance upon him, and she stopped at the foot of the staircase with eager questioning written upon each expressive feature.

"You have? Oh, 'Dug,' I am very glad! Where is she?"

"In Baltimore."

"And she wrote to *you?*"

"Yes; you know we were excellent friends," with a quick sigh that did not escape her keen ear, "and I undertook—a—little matter of business for her. She wrote to consult with me about it."

"How funny! Won't you give me her address, 'Dug'?"

"Dug" searched vainly for the letter in the inner pocket of his dress-coat, where he had fancied it lay all evening, making his heart warmer and lighter in consequence.

"I must have dropped it when I took Cheston his mail," he said. "I'll go see in the morning."

* * * * * * * * *

"Julia," exclaimed Mrs. Herndon, when she gained the boudoir of her young friend next day, half laughing, and a little breathless from the flight of stairs encountered, "this is *your* doing!"

"This" was a note of thanks and regrets from Mr. Cheston, faultlessly worded, but bearing on its very face a chill protest against patronage, forced or condescending.

"Why, I did not know that you had invited him!" disclaimed Julia, the rich color riotous in her cheeks. "But he has the intuition of a woman, and is the proudest man I know; besides, when I come to consider it, he would scarcely have accepted such a sacrifice, for he is more generous than either you or I!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

CUI BONO?

"I have had a dream this evening, while the white and gold were fleeting;
But I need not, need not tell it—where would be the good?"

JEAN INGELOW.

NEW YORK talked louder than ever of Miss Vosburgh's eccentricities, for she was seen everywhere constantly with the organist of St. Aloysius's,—at operas, concerts, and recitals,—everywhere but, as Mrs. Herndon had said, in society. And Chickering Hall had witnessed another creditable display on the part of Cheston's class. Slowly but surely the musically cultured were awakening to a perception of his worth. Miss Vosburgh, fresh from the Friday Abend unterhaltungen of the Leipzic Conservatoire, declared that no adept of the *Kammer Musik Soiréen* could claim more thorough proficiency than Mr. Cheston's best pupils. This criticism was widely quoted, and there were many with whom the unpronounceable German names wrought more effectually than even Miss Vosburgh's pronunciamento; for that young lady, over-fastidious in many of her tastes, was by no means free from the fault of being hypercritical.

She was working very hard at present, using up any quantity of lead pencils, and running constant risk of being poisoned by the black lead. But after a time the scribblings were legibly copied in that free fair hand which won for her the eternal blessings of the proof-readers, and "Finis" was written at the end of the last page.

Then she felt free to rest, she said. Shall I give you a sample of her resting?

* * * * * * * * * *

Outside the winter night was cold and the snow fell steadily; in the Vosburgh drawing-room there were the radiance of noonday and the sweet breath of hot-house bouquets. Beneath the chandelier sat "Julee," in a coquettish French costume of black and yellow, with topazes lying on her bare white neck, clasping her arms, and glowing in the dark braids of her hair; opposite her the familiar friend and companion of so many hours. She leaned a little toward him, the color steady in her cheeks, the expression of her face singularly calm and peaceful, her head drooped like a flower on its stem; she looked like one dreaming some rare and altogether lovely dream.

"I fear your damsel is too forlorn. Phædre picking holes in the myrtle-leaves with her hair-pin, in the state of absent-mindedness to which her lover's defection has reduced her, is no fair sample of the love-crossed maiden of to-day."

"You praised my maiden's constancy only a week ago."

He rose and walked over to the mantel, looking down into a Sèvres dish of roses with a troubled countenance. Her eyes followed his movements wonderingly; what was wrong with him? She had never seen him look like that.

"The Corinthian tyrants' creed is the one adopted generally by most of the world," shifting his position so that he might see her face.

"Was there only *one* Corinthian tyrant?" she asked, with that quizzical half-smile.

He laughed, but after a gloomy fashion, resuming his chair opposite her. "The creed of the one was the creed

of the whole: keep your oath solemnly, but don't hesitate to break it if it clash with your interest and—half the world adds—inclination."

"Don't treat me to a new phase of your character in the shape of arrogance, monsieur, nor ascribe worse impulses to humanity at large than you find in your own breast. I suspect you allow those blue *lunettes* to color your sentiments. Take them off and view the world impartially; be sure that it is made up, for the most part, of individuals no better, no worse than ourselves."

"If my *lunettes*, as you call them, are blue, yours are surely *couleur de rose!*"

"No, I don't use them; nor would I, unless I should want to adopt some ridiculous disguise, and there are other ways of doing that. Let Phya but be bold and beautiful enough, and what is to prevent the populace from falling in front of her chariot and worshipping her as Minerva?"

"What is the worship of the populace to the heart that has no home? to the life longing for sympathy, companionship, love? to the man that doubts if in one human breast a single tender memory of him is cherished?"

Surely he had been beguiled into thinking aloud, but the flushed, half-startled face of the girl aroused him to consciousness.

"Forgive me," he said; "I have bored you beyond endurance."

"Wait, I have something for you."

She did not ring for a servant to fetch it but went herself, returning in a moment with a dingy volume bound in calf, which she put in his hand.

"*Tenez!*" she said, with that high silver note predominant in her voice. "Years ago I picked it up on some mining-grounds in the North, where we were making a tour of observation. A young man had been reading it,

for its lessons, he said." She looked very shy and arch and deprecating, with that half-timid eagerness of glance and tone so entirely new to her.

He could not affect ignorance of her meaning; but while he mastered his surprise and confusion very creditably, he did not offer to admit his disguise.

"The lesson he learned from the Tristia was not one of hope," he said, in his usual manner, taking the book from her hand; "however, I accept it with gratitude, Miss Vosburgh, for, I doubt not, it is better to kill hope in one's heart." With which he bowed and left her.

"Julee" flew to her dressing-room, and in the depths of her crimson chair wept such tears as she had never wept before; not even when she had stood in the soft Italian sunlight where lay the mother she could "just remember," sleeping in the land of her love by Caius Cestus's tomb. For shining through these tears were rainbows that heralded a fair to-morrow, and the dream was emerging into a reality. So she thought, poor "Julee," whose days of rest were so nearly over!

And in his room, amid the symbols of his labor, sat the music-master late into the night, with his "*lunettes*" discarded and his fingers thrust into his hair, thinking, thinking. Was the man contemplating some duplicity and seeking for excuse among the lawless creeds of the old Grecian code that their folly should haunt his brain so persistently?

The difference in a man's love, as compared with a woman's, is that where he doubts she trusts. With reason, perhaps, since so often he is made to suffer from a woman's caprices, to her shame be it written. But there are those who enjoy perfect faith in the protestations of a lover, because they measure his truth by their own. And men from their broader experience grow prone to suspect faith

in the abstract, though I think they do not gain in experience what they lose in charity and peace of mind. Cheston went to bed in the early gray dawn of the morning with the problem unsolved; after all, *cui bono?* since he had resolved to "kill hope in his heart."

CHAPTER XXX.

A GHOST FROM THE PAST.

"My soul is jealous of my happier eyes."

JEAN INGELOW.

"I THINK you and Cheston, Julia, will be very complete in Zelter's classics if you continue as you have begun. It is not every bachelor that owns such solace for his lonely hours."

Doctor Duncan was escorting his cousin to her carriage. He had been much surprised to find her in Cheston's apartment, bending with him over the orchestra scores on the rack, with her maid, Leah, playing propriety over by the grate.

"You don't in the least understand what you are talking about," Miss Vosburgh had replied; "we are doing some work together, that is all."

Then the carriage bore her away, and Duncan did not follow to see it halt before a certain opera-house and his cousin enter by a private entrance, quite like one of the habitues of the house. Neither was he enlightened upon the subject when he read in his evening paper the following item:

"'IN SANCHO PANZA'S PIT' is the title of a new opera in course of preparation for the boards at —— Opera-House. The authors choose to remain incognito until the merits of the play have been tested. Competent judges, who have examined it, predict for it instant success. The

score abounds with melodies—Volkslieder, so to speak—sure to awaken a responsive chord in the breasts of the people, while the stanchest adherents to the grand old Titans of musical art can scarcely fail to be satisfied with the classical thoroughness evinced in its construction. There are none of the distinguishing features of any of our familiar *maestri* to be discerned in the score, but *on dit* attributes to a certain *bel esprit* of our great world the enchanting lyrics and witty situations with which the libretto abounds. The incidents of the play hinge upon that eminently ludicrous episode in Don Quixote where the knight's squire, Sancho Panza, while wandering about in the dark, is precipitated over a precipice, when with the energy of despair, he clutches a root growing out of a cleft in its side, and clings to it frantically until day dawning shows him his pit, a sink-hole, and himself just *one foot from the bottom*. It is a very weird tale, evidently intended for melodramatic and scenic effect, and not to be too critically viewed in the light of reason, but the *morale* is not wanting for those who consider it indispensable. A company of fair talent has been engaged to present the piece, and Manager L——'s new tenor, M. Homay, who enjoys an international reputation, and has stood the test of a critical Boston audience, will make his first appearance in the *rôle* of the leading character."

"Julee" went out a great deal now, and chose to exert herself more untiringly than ever. The shining eyes had acquired a trick of thoughtfulness that was altogether new to them; the rich color was less steady than its wont, on her cheeks, though vivid enough at a sudden step in the hall or hand on the door.

She went to her father one day with an open letter in her hand. "Papa, you remember that lovely Miss Ran-

dolph we met one summer at Rock Enon?—the girl with an invalid uncle and an old aunt, knitting always, like the *concierges* in the conservatory hall at Paris. Well, we have been corresponding of late, and I have prevailed upon her to visit us. She is coming to-day."

"And you will want to show her a great deal of gayety while she is here?"

"I don't know; unless she has changed she is not one of that sort."

"Well, what is it, my love?"

"Merely that I want you to know she is coming, and be prepared to welcome her like the cavalier that you are," with a warm fond smile. But she still stood at his side, rolling the letter into a lamp-lighter. "Papa, I shall not be able to decide about going with you in the spring," speaking in a low voice with strange hesitation, "at least not yet awhile. But there is plenty of time, and you will keep the place open for me, as they say in business, will you not, in case I should decide to go?"

"In case you do not I shall ask Cheston to relieve me of the responsibility and go in my stead. It would be of infinite advantage to him; but the fellow is so reserved and independent one don't know how to offer him service."

She walked to her dressing-room with a strange smile, and threw herself in the great red *fauteuil* with a dubious half-laugh. "By that time I surely will be able to decide," she thought; "and then what will it matter which of us stays or goes?" But the imperious nature of the girl reasserted its dominion, and she sprang up to ring for her carriage, carolling in her rich silvery voice, in the pauses of her toilet-making,—

> "And I clasped and held it close,
> Sweet, lovely, thornless rose!"

"I have the same right to caress Jicks that Roma had to pet his hen, or Rembrandt his monkey," Miss Vosburgh was saying in her high sweet voice when Cheston entered her drawing-room that evening. She was stroking a hideous little Scotch terrier of the ugliest, most uncompromising shade of dingy brown. Doctor Duncan stood on the defensive, as was evident from tone and attitude.

"I must admit I have no sympathy with the author of Athalie's mood when he finds such intense delight in heading his children's nursery procession ; but genius is wedded to folly all the world over, is it not, Cheston?"

Cheston did not answer ; his eyes, behind the color-lending *lunettes*, were rivetted upon a figure that lounged in a dormeuse with its face in shadow,—a figure draped in blue, with a weighty coronet of pale-brown braids wound round a shapely head.

"Amy, allow me to introduce my friend,—Mr. Cheston, Miss Randolph. I am glad you have come, though you are too late to have heard the strictures on your gift. Tell them its history, please."

"He followed me home one day, eh, Jicks?" snapping his fingers at the dog making sundry demonstrations of delight over him, "and Miss Vosburgh chose to play the Good Samaritan to the vagrant, rather than send him to the pound. I warned her it might prove a thankless job."

As he spoke, Miss Randolph, who seemed very weary, turned her face toward him under the full rays of the gas-jets, a peculiar shade of perplexity upon it. She looked at him earnestly with those questioning, serious eyes. "Julee" and the doctor also were curiously regarding him. Was it a wonder that his eyes fell?

"Why, you are hoarse as a raven, Cheston, and small wonder considering how reckless you are. But the ques-

tion is, what will they do for their tenor to-morrow at H———?"

"May I speak to you a moment, Miss Vosburgh? my time is limited." Doctor Duncan went over to the dormeuse, and "Julee" made room for her friend on the ottoman.

"Are you not well? you are very pale. Ah, you have no mercy on yourself, you work too hard. I never have seen you look so ill." The sweet mocking voice fell to so soft a pitch of sympathy that it was almost tenderness.

"I am more merciful to myself than I deserve," he said, still with that husky note in his voice, while the pallor on his face grew even more pronounced. But she noticed that his glance went back to the dormeuse and she did not wonder at that, for her friend was very lovely. The passing years had developed every charm of face and form into completeness. The girl who had laughed over her old-world fancies at Rock Enon, and treated her to quaint little lectures on life and its duties, had grown into the maturer grace of womanhood. But the quaint naïve charm of the child still lingered, and though the eyes had grown very serious, they were full of a calm peace, as of one who has learned after long struggling to say,—

> "I have not what I love the best,
> But I must thank God for the rest,
> While I hold heaven a verity."

Once or twice the soft musical sound of her laughter floated over to them where they sat. Cheston rose, a distraught look in his eyes, as of pain endured too keen to smile away.

"I shall have to leave," he said; "I should like to stay, but am not equal to it."

"I can well believe that," was his hostess's reply, "for indeed you are very unlike yourself to-night. I trust you are not going to be ill—*now* of all times in the year! Ask your landlady to make you a cup of tisane: it is what my *bonne* always gave me for a cold when a nursery-child, —that and a mustard-bath."

It was well that Cheston had learned the lesson of the Tristia so well, else I think, for all his vigorous will and dauntless courage, he might have gone mad that night.

"Alone! alone! always alone!" shrieked that ghost that had arisen from his past and trailed her sweeping robes through his desolate rooms. In vain that he had borne life when it was a burden that weighed him to the very earth and humbly had striven to make the best of it, in vain the weary travail of the years, for of what avail is repentance without atonement?

Ah, his faith was not as strong as his will, that kept him from going mad that night, else would he have trusted his repentance with Him who has offered us all an atonement, "eternal, though unseen."

CHAPTER XXXI.

RENUNCIATION.

"Come, let us go! your cheeks are pale,
But half my life I leave behind."—*In Memoriam.*

In "Julee's" boudoir, Cheston bent his head over the little ebony writing-desk and demonstrated, with his pencil, sundry alterations to be made in some sheets of newly-printed score, and in his earnestness he raised his voice injudiciously. Quite free from hoarseness it was now. "Julee" leaned back in her crimson chair and encouraged his suggestions with a most flattering attention.

While he was still enlarging upon the points under discussion, the *portière* was swept aside and Miss Vosburgh's guest presented herself behind it. She looked pale and agitated, her hand at her heart, as though to arrest its tumultuous throbbings.

"What is it, Amy? What has frightened you?" cried "Julee," springing from her easy-chair to her friend's side.

"I heard a voice—I thought—I thought there was no other in the world like it. Forgive me! I have interrupted you—but indeed I was greatly shocked."

She looked keenly at the man bending over the desk on his knee, with his left hand thrust in his dark-brown hair. He gave her the casual glance of a stranger and a formal bow, and fell to his work again. But she did not see the look in the eyes behind those concealing glasses,—the look of a wild creature brought to bay! He thrust

the papers from him when she left with a gesture so expressive that "Julee" was at his side in an instant. The sweet sympathy of those whilom proud eyes unmanned him.

"Does *she* look like one to harbor memory of wrong?" he asked, in gasping tones, as he caught convulsively at the hand on his sleeve. "If there be sin and misery and reckless wrongdoing in the world, does *she* look like one to judge them too severely?"

"Then you know her, you have seen her before, some time in the past of which you never speak?"

"It is as you say," he said; and amid all the mists of doubt and anguish that were blotting his features from her, she still retained a keen consciousness of what he was suffering. "You will not let her dream it? you will guard my secret closely?"

"Is there no hope for you?—*Juste ceil!* then I pity you!"

The passionate despair in her heart found vent in that brief cry. Its tone struck him with dismay, but he could not fathom its meaning, and he thanked her for her sympathy with impetuous words that wounded her like so many well-aimed blows. He did not see that her lips had lost their ripe bloom, or that the fitful carmine drifting from her cheeks had left them white as freshly-fallen snow.

* * * * * * * *

And now there were two men in Gotham who waged warfare with a subtle temptation. "O Love! Love! are ye oftener angel or demon?"

To the one the tempter said, "Win her from destruction, from the pitiful results of that fruitless quest which she has made the Juggernaut of her youth. She already feels more than a friend's affection for you; you have power

as no other has to drive the dark shadows from her eyes; in time your constant and untiring love will lull to forgetfulness all memory of that other one."

And to the other it said, "She has not forgotten; her memory is faithful as your own, but a spectre stands between you, and at the first glimpse of it she would turn away with affright, nay, it might be with even horror and aversion in her gentle eyes. But you may woo her with the voice of him she loved, aye, wed her, perhaps, with your alien name, for when did one of your race ever fail when he set his will, as a flint, to win?"

* * * * * * * * *

A few evenings later saw Amy and Doctor Duncan driving along the broad road to Manhattanville, just as they had used to drive in the old days of their intimacy along the suburban roads of Baltimore. For a while they drove rapidly in silence, the keen winter wind smiting their cheeks; but on their homeward route, Doctor Duncan let the reins fall slack on the ponies' necks, and turned to her with a mixed expression on his face that puzzled her. "What of your quest, Amy?"

"It has been in vain so far," her voice faltered.

"And you have lost hope?"

"No; I shall hope as long as I live."

He sighed deeply, gathering his reins up afresh, and again the houses flew past like shadows; the winter wind smote their faces keenly. He turned to her almost fiercely at last. "Child," he cried, "can't you bear your troubles better than you do?" for the haunting pain in her eyes looking up into the sunset skies stung him into pity in spite of himself. She looked at him with gentle surprise. When had he ever spoken so before?

"I can bear it no better," she said, in a tone of timid, wistful entreaty. "I try very hard, but I can do no better."

"Forgive me, little girl; I spoke harshly, but there are so many burdens in life, and each believes his own to be heaviest. Look up to where the sun is setting: is not that a magnificent pageant? Red and green, blue and gold! I wonder what human artist would dare use his colors so lavishly? An hour ago and all those radiant masses of color were sombre clouds. If we could have patience to wait, the clouds of unrest and misunderstanding in our life's sky would lighten and dissolve and float away in lambent luminance as do those; don't you believe it?"

"Yes, I believe it," slow tears dropping down her cheeks, "only it seems sad to wait until the sun is nearly down, until life is nearly over."

Then this good man, with the noble self-abnegation of his nature, renounced the purpose with which he hads et out on this drive, and, seeing that her burden was not to be transferred, sought to lighten it by that happy faculty of his which had won for him such an enviable reputation in the *polie sociètè* of Gotham. By the time he left her at her friend's door there were no evidences of tears or unhappy memories in her eyes. Instead, the pain at her heart was easier, the cloud on her life less dark; for, good physician that he was, he had directed her to the only balm that could soothe a wound like hers, even the Balm of Gilead.

That night in the Vosburgh drawing-rooms a motley crowd swept to and fro in all the parti-display of a *bal masque*. Miss Vosburgh, in the short skirts and peaked hat of *L'Incroyable*, challenged detection even upon the part of her most intimate friends. For who had ever known "Julee" silent and distrait as *L'Incroyable* behind her mask? And those lack-lustre eyes that looked out indifferently from the hideous little lace-fringed openings

of the domino held no flashing demands for the best that life had to bestow.

Amy Randolph, in the shimmering robes of Leicester's ill-fated bride, found herself face to face with a domino in steel and blue, whose device was unfamiliar to any in the crowd.

"So, my fair countess, you have left off dreaming of Leicester long enough to grace this giddy revel with your presence."

"What if I bring my dreams to the revel, fair sir?" she answered, in the same playful strain, though she found herself unprepared again for the surprise his voice occasioned her, and set him down at once as "Julee's" musical friend.

"Then I should say your dreams were hardy things to bear such rough usage, and destined to become realities some day."

"Heaven grant it, kind sir, else would my life hold small compensation for its pains. I have come to consider this world a dream-land after all, compared with the fuller existence that awaits us; and if our dreams be pure in this life, who shall say that they will not come true in the next?"

Was it a stifled groan that issued from the lips of the domino in steel and blue? *L'Incroyable* darted between them, laying a light hand on the arm of each. "My two best friends!" she cried, in the rich ringing tones that had been so well disguised all the evening. "I can trust you to understand each other!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

CANCELLED.

"And the voice of the dead became a living voice to me."
TENNYSON.

DOCTOR DUNCAN sat waiting for his friend in the *bottega*, as he had named the room where hung the huge chalk-marked blackboard, and where the insignia of his profession littered every table and chair. But as the moments passed and he did not make his appearance, the doctor went over to the door of the anteroom adjoining, and knocked lightly on its panel.

"Is it you, Duncan? Come in."

"Why, old fellow, what keeps you so long? You have taken a pretty while to dress; are you always so tardy?"

"By no means; the truth is I fell to thinking." As he spoke he reached over for a ring that lay on his dressing-table, and fitted it leisurely down upon his finger.

"I was not aware you were guilty of a single vanity, Cheston. Allow me," and Doctor Duncan leaned over his friend's hand to inspect the ring. "A very fine intaglio. What is the figure?"

"Nemesis; don't you recognize the symbols?"

What spirit of recklessness, bravado, call it what you will, prompted him to wear that ring to-night for the first time in long years?

The two went out together very quietly. "What is wrong, Duncan? You don't look débonnaire as usual. Are the old heart troubles growing stubborn again?"

"No; I believe I have them well under hand, Cheston. I have had an unwelcome conviction forced upon me, that is all."

"Can't you resist it?"

"Impossible!" And though his voice was troubled, the expression of indomitable calm on his face reassured his friend.

Just before Miss Vosburgh left her boudoir that evening she plucked all the scarlet beads off the thorny points of her card-receiver, for she had accidentally hurt her hand upon it earlier in the day, and, as she had said at the time, "so much for pretension of any sort!" So the red beads, that only served to conceal the cruel points, but not to blunt them, were all thrust into the grate, and it stood for what it was, a pretty glossy toy, upon which one must, however, bestow very careful handling.

They made a noticeable party that night. Many lorgnettes were levelled at their box. Two beautiful women, two handsome men, that was all the lorgnettes said. Not even Cheston knew that his friend's hands were like ice even through his gloves; nor did Amy understand the mocking glance with which "Julee" leaned towards Cheston, just as the curtain was rising, half whispering the refrain from her favorite German song, "*Röselein! Röselein! müssen denn Dornen sein?*"

The new opera had drawn a crowded house to witness its presentation. From the first scene it seemed to attract.

"See! the critics and the newspaper men are still holding out," whispered Miss Vosburgh; "that augurs well for its success."

The third act was well on, the scene a forest, with very fair moonlight filtering down between the trees; the chief episode of the act a duel, in which the principals advanced very near the footlights. And when

the shots were fired one fell,—no mere stage-fall, but with a dull, lifeless thud, as of one shot through the heart. Deafening applause rent the auditorium, for the relaxed figure lying there among the short, thick grasses simulated death to perfection, from the pallor that spread to his blue-black hair to the rigid line of his lips, faintly parted over the gleaming teeth. Long before success had been pronounced by this *viva voce* of the audience the manager had been telegraphed from the orchestra of the favorable impression being produced upon the house. So when the drop-curtain fell on the last act, it only remained for the author to present himself before the footlights and receive the thanks of the public. But this was not likely to happen, for the writer of the scores was oblivious to everything but to that face lying in the glare of the footlights ; and Miss Randolph's eyes could have held no more of sickening horror in their soft depths had that acted death over there upon the stage been the reality it seemed.

"Take me home, will you not? Oh, be quick, I feel so faint!"

"Do you know how strange you are acting?" said "Julee," touching his arm when the curtain dropped. "Miss Randolph is ill; Douglass has taken her home."

"Amy! did she see? did she know?"

"What was there to see, or to know?" And "Julee" sighed wearily. "She is not used to the drama, and you found fault with my plot as too harrowing. There comes the tenor for an ovation. What a handsome man!"

Cheston jerked the glasses from his eyes and rose to his feet with the crowd. "Julee" looked at him earnestly, she had never seen his eyes before. How fine they were, dark-blue, wide and clear! but she could make nothing of the strained, incredulous expression in them now.

He turned to her with a face as white as death. "As sure as there is a God in heaven," he said, with great labored breaths, "that is Rabys Holme! No ghost, no spectre, but his living, breathing self!"

"'Monsieur Homay' they call him in the company. Do you know him? They are calling for the composers. Will you show? *Pour moi*, I am not disposed to relinquish one jot of my triumph to-night."

He obeyed her imperious gesture and advanced with her to the front of the box. There followed round after round of tumultuous applause, for the author of "Alida" was an idol in New York society, and they forgave the stranger his presumption for the music he had given them that took their hearts by storm.

"Hugh," whispered a little black-eyed woman, clutching a brown-bearded man frantically by the arm, "look, there stands Chester, as sure as I live!—there, in the box by the stage, the man they have just been cheering, the man who wrote the play. It is Chester!"

"Why, Milly, how can you? Chester's hair was as yellow as our baby's?"

"But his eyes! did you see his eyes? They belonged to no one in the world but Chester!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AT LAST!

"After long grief and pain,
To find the arms of my true love
Round me once again."

TENNYSON.

"It was Rabys Holme," said Amy, when Doctor Duncan had got her safely in the carriage and the coachman had closed the door after them. "It was Rabys Holme, my uncle's ward!"

"Who? where?" asked the doctor.

"The first actor,—that man who fell dead on the stage."

Then it was not the Nemesis on his friend's finger that had turned her sick and faint. It was still reserved for him to be the first to tell her that her quest was ended,—worthy reward for a love like his, worthy reward and supreme test in one.

"I wrote you that we had heard of him, you remember?"—her lips were unsteady, the shock of recognizing this man had been very great,—"that he had become a singer by profession, that he had gained some triumphs in the land of his birth, but we did not hear that he had returned."

"And if you had heard it, you would have been none the wiser: he calls himself Homay, that first tenor who acted in the new play to-night."

"It is Rabys, none other. Oh, is it not hard to trust always in God's justice? To see him reaping laurels of praise from his fellow-men for those poor little tricks of song and gesture——"

He interrupted her, laying his hand on hers with the old gentle action that bespoke sympathy and encouragement. "But you *do* trust, you *do* believe that God, though working by ways altogether unknown to us, doeth always the things that are right and best for us?"

"Yes." Amy's tears were falling so fast now that she could scarcely trust her voice.

"You can still say, 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him'?"

She was utterly past speaking now, but she gave him a glance from her sad drenched eyes that made him recall the words of the lovely old rhyme,—

> "And the cheeks tear-washed are whitest
> That the blessed angels know!"

They finished their drive in perfect silence, but he did not, as she supposed he would, bid her good-night at the foot of the staircase; instead, he asked her, if she was not too fatigued, to go with him into the drawing-room,—he had something to say to her yet to-night.

She waited for him to speak, but he sat looking down upon the floor in silence. How could she know that in that brief space of time he was quietly invoking aid through this ordeal he chose not to spare himself?

"We have both been guilty of a great mistake, Amy. I am going to show you how I have been punished for my arrogance. I found a clue, this evening, by which I knew that your quest was ended." He stopped to note the effect of his words, but she evidently had not digested his meaning. "I pocketed the clue, and I thought either to-day or to-morrow, or any day I may conclude upon, I will give it into her hand and tell her that her waiting-time is over; but not until I can gather a little more strength, for you will remember, Amy, that when I resign the clue

into your hands, I also renounce the sweetest hope of my life. See now,"—Amy was gazing at him with troubled eyes,—"just when I have assured myself that but for me the mystery would remain unsolved, another agency enters—shall we call it Providence?—and throws an evidence at our very feet, before which my poor clue dwindles into the merest insignificance; for it clears the mystery to all who have observed it; it ends your quest without the slightest degree of interference upon my part."

"Doctor, doctor, what do you mean? Is it that Cedric has been found, that he is near?"

Doctor Duncan laughed. Forgive him that harsh note in his voice; remember he is resigning her utterly to another, this soft-eyed lovely woman, whose empty place in his life he can never hope to fill.

"Ah, Amy, Amy, it was a faithless memory at best. Do you think *you* could disguise yourself from me with a pair of violet glasses and hair dyed brown with genista? No, you owe me no thanks; he has seen Rabys Holme with his own eyes, and knows that he is free to come to you now that the stain of blood-guiltiness no longer rests upon him. What a black weight is lifted from his life! There, do not weep so, dear child; these long years of trouble have taught him some good and useful lessons, and you have many left in which to live and love together. Good-by, little girl!" and how could she know he was bidding her a final farewell? "God bless you and grant you the happiness that He has so long denied you! You deserve it, for you have been patient and faithful." Then he took her sweet face between his hands and kissed her gently on the forehead. "It is no disloyalty to him that you should give me this little of all that belongs to him. God bless you both!"

Oh, why must the bitter drop ever thus find its

way into the brimming beaker of life's choicest draught?

* * * * * * * *

Steps in the vestibule; voices in the hall. She started to her feet, her hand pressed tight against her heart. "Doctor Duncan is waiting for you, Miss Julia, in the boudoir," she heard Leah say to her young mistress, then a hand on the door of the drawing-room. Was she going to faint, that everything grew so dark before her eyes, she who had never fainted even when her anguish was at its sharpest?

He came toward her; the mists cleared away. Oh, if she had seen them she could never have mistaken them, those beautiful wide blue eyes, filled with such a light of gladness and joy and gratitude as she had never seen in human eyes before!

"Cedric, my dear, my dear!"

And at that low quivering cry, at that voice from his happy youth, the strong man broke down with a sob, hiding his face against the crown of her sunny hair. After years of such loneliness as he had known, such hopeless weariness and pain, to feel that soft touch stroking his cheek, it was more than he could bear. He had felt like shouting an hour ago; he, who for so long had feared a familiar voice, an earnest glance as his worst foes, he could have shouted aloud in the delight of his restored manhood; but here he had no voice for speech, he could only remember that his long days of exile were over, that sympathy and love, so long strangers, were to be the companions of his daily life once more, and the quick choking sobs that, with a man's shame of unmanly weakness, he forced himself to subdue would arise in his throat and hinder his speech in spite of all he could do to prevent it.

She did not wait for him to speak; she stroked his cheek

with her slender caressing fingers, and asked him where had he been so long, so long, and did he know how she had been looking and longing for him, always believing that he would come? And his father was old and broken with disease; but this would make him young again. And Aunt Bab, and poor old Jacob! Oh, Cedric, my dear, my dear! For what was the use of trying to tell him how happy they all would be? And after a while he could trust himself to speak, though he was slow to do it, having full occupation for his eyes that were hungry for an unmolested look at that sweet face seen only in his dreams for years.

What had he done in all this long time? He would tell her all some day. To-night he had no memory for anything that he had suffered. He had not left the old wood of Cheswick a murderer on that September evening so long ago; he was free to shift his disguise, free to confront the world, free to claim the love of his youth,—could his brain hold more than that to-night?

* * * * * * * * * *

"Julee" sat in her boudoir, wrapped in a crimson dressing-gown, her slippered feet upon the grate. How strange are the flights that thought takes, bidding defiance to impediments of matter and mind, and flying straight to its destined goal, as an arrow from a skilful hand. Strange that the girl should be thinking to-night of her mother's grave in that old Roman burial-ground, where so often she had stood in the fair Italian sunlight and felt her heart ache for pity of the young life shut down so deep from the glad merriment and gracious beauty of the world. To-night, when she had just drunk of a cup that the world seldom offers, even to its favored few, to-night to be dreaming of her mother's lonely grave by Caius Cestus's tomb!

There came a soft knock at the door behind the velvet *portière*.

"*Entrez!*" cried the high silver voice.

"Oh, is it you? That is right. I have been waiting for you to come; but you need tell me nothing, for I know all. 'Dug' has kept me up half the night, recounting the whole specious tangle. It is the most romantic thing I could ever have dreamed of; I shall certainly make a note of it for my next book, and if the critics dare to hint at improbability, I shall fling it in their very faces for an authentic history of two lives!

"Oh, 'Julee,' if you could realize how I feel to-night!"

"It is beyond me, my dear, entirely. I have experienced more than most persons of my years, but that phase is new to me altogether."

"Won't you be serious, 'Julee'? I cannot rest with this great joy in my heart. God seems too near,—nearer than ever before."

"Julee's" mocking voice was hushed; her proud bright eyes grew wistful with fast-coming tears, rare evidences of emotion indeed with her. She drew her friend's head down to her shoulder, and patted the pale-brown braids with her fingers. "Poor child! how you are trembling!" she said. "I *am* glad for you, very, very glad, but you have often said yourself, have you not? that one was not in a position to sympathize entirely with one unless one had lived through some previous experience of a similar nature. Now, I have never lost my lover and found him again, nor do I expect that I ever will, but, as far as I can, I feel very glad for you, my dear. Of one thing I am sure, that no one deserves happiness more than you, you dear, good little thing. I have always thought you the best girl that ever lived. Under all that trouble I should have died! How glad I am that Mr. Cheston is *somebody*

after all; not that *I* should have missed the world's opinion upon that point, but to silence Mrs. Herndon and that set, and to humiliate them, perhaps, by a display of my superior judgment."

"He says if it had not been for you, he cannot even imagine what would have become of him. He says when he was almost as much of a vagrant as Jicks, you singled him out and did one thing after another to help him."

"Nonsense!" said "Julee," turning her face away and screening her eyes with her hand arched above them. "He is the most self-reliant man I ever knew, and has to thank nobody for his success. His own excellent judgment and determination were his only allies in the life he has led here. If I have helped him at all, it was only through the sympathy I gave him," and Amy wondered here to hear the full proud tones falter. "And you know how he has helped *me;* I had told you before to-night. You know, of course, that the new play is our joint work. But who ever would have foretold such a striking commentary as his life has made upon my libretto?"

Julia sat alone over the grate long after her friend had retired. I cannot tell you of what she was thinking, but this I know, that after that night no one ever again saw the old flashing demands in Miss Vosburgh's eyes, asking from life all it had to give. There were only a few who remarked upon the change, fewer still who attempted to analyze it. And they had small opportunity to do so, for in the early spring she left with her father for those "fair realms beyond the sea," where, as the years passed, there came to them fitful reports of how the young American authoress was winning her way to the fairest heights in the land she loved. For "Julee" had reckoned vainly upon the taint in her blood to see her safely out of life's troubles. The proud, passionate heart beat on, notwith-

standing its cruel pain, and had Cheston read her books of later years he had not denied her the poet's countersign. Beautiful, gay, and cheerful to her life's end,—not a long life,—its vitality was too intense for longevity; the proud young descendant of the *Salon* accepted life's lesson, as that other Julee had done before her, none the less bravely that its rewards awaited a future development, concerning which our "Julee" had come to cherish a livelier conviction than in those old days when, beneath the trees at Rock Enon, she had shuddered at the mention of the grave, and had accepted Lorenzo's creed as the only one worth adopting. And for Love she had substituted Truth, which, with the bold courage of her nature, she wielded like the good sword Gram of the Neibelungenlied, the sword that cuts through the finest wool.

A paragraph under the head of personals was widely distributed among the city papers the ensuing week. It was headed "Truth Stranger than Fiction," and ran thus:

"A most romantic history has come to light in our midst. Mr. Cheston, fast becoming noted as one of our leading *maestri*, whose music-rooms are on —— Street, has, by the most remarkable concatenation of events, been identified as the only son of Robert Cheswick, Esq., whose grandfather was one of the pioneer settlers of —— County, Maryland. The story runs that Mr. Cheswick, *alias* Cheston, when a mere lad, was inveigled into a quarrel with his father's ward, and in a scuffle which ensued left him stunned and bleeding in a field near the house, and fled under the delusion that he had killed him. It was at the presentation of his opera, 'In Sancho Panza's Pit,'—libretto written by Miss Vosburgh, the author of 'Alida,'—that he recognized in the principal actor, M. Homay, the man whom he had left for dead

near his father's house so many years ago. The *dénouement* must have been startling in the extreme; and just here it strikes us that the title of the opera may very well be applied to the remarkable position he has occupied for so many years. Surely only a very strong and courageous nature could have held out against such desperate odds. And yet he not only endured, but won his way to a substantial and growing success as a musical educator. The descendant of the Maryland Cheswicks needs no voucher wherever the name is heard, but this one, who, we are informed, is next to the last of his line, may claim one on the most enduring and honorable basis,— steady courage, conscientious endeavor, and persistent determination in the face of opposing forces that might easily have daunted the bravest."

Cheston showed that to Miss Vosburgh with a serio-comic smile. "Your friend, Mrs. Herndon, will reap some deserved indemnity here for her generosity towards me on a former occasion," he said.

"Oh, how proud you are!" cried "Julee."

"But *you*," he took her two hands and kissed them almost reverently, "*you* never asked for a voucher! My noble friend, how can I ever thank you?"

"Who wants thanks?" she cried, drawing her hands from his grasp. "And for obligations, I think we are not at odds. You have done for me all that I have done for you." In the bright dark eyes were tears; he had never seen them there before. "You have given me the poet's countersign," she said in her heart, though only to her heart did she make that confession, and, oddly enough, the bruised beating thing felt somewhat eased thereby.

One scene more and we end this chapter. Cheston had

assembled his class for the last time. The lessons given, conscientiously, painstakingly, as usual, he proceeded to explain to them why, for a time at least, he must disband them. "My father is old and diseased; I have not seen him in many years. If the time ever comes when he can spare me, or if I can induce him to return with me, I shall come back and resume the old lessons just where we left off."

The faces of his class wore very serious expressions. How should they fill his place? The most of them were too poor to avail themselves of professors' prices. It was a noble work he had started in this unpretentious *bottega*, that of rendering music available to the masses; and his music, the written scores that had won him so much fame, were dear to the hearts of the people because not above their peculiar needs. There were plenty of his profession, men with Conservatory prizes, who dealt in mysterious harmonies only adapted to the cultured Few; but to the uncultured Many this man had striven to make music a great *vox humana*, at the same time preserving the delicate first principles pure and simple.

As he talked in farewell to his class, Doctor Duncan entered, followed by some people,—not patrons, it was too late for that,—two ladies and a gentleman. Cheston gave his class a parting adieu and turned to his guests.

"Don't you know me, Chester? Why, my lad, I haven't changed like you."

Know him! and the black-eyed little woman at his side, and the pale, serene-eyed face of the lady on his arm,—no other surely than the white angel of his fevered fancies.

"My poor lad! and you never used the reference I gave you, after all!" Then Captain Hollis drew out his handkerchief, and walked over to the window, where, in-

stead of using it upon his rather prominent nasal appendage, he fell vigorously to polishing a corner of the window-pane.

"I should have known you anywhere in the world, for you can't dye your eyes, if you can your hair!" cried Milly, who had never seen the disguising effect of a pair of violet-tinted "*lunettes.*"

"And I know at last all that you have suffered, my boy," said the pale-faced lady whom he had called Miss Sinclair. "It is a hard, but I doubt not a just law that the iniquities of the father shall be visited upon the heads of the children." And as she spoke there was the old pain as of memory in her eyes.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"FORGIVE ME!"

"His old bewildered head withdrew,
And grasped his arm, and looked and looked him through and through;
'Twas strange . . . the long, the doubtful scrutiny to view.
At last delight o'er all his features stole:
'It is my own!' he cried, and clasped him to his soul."

Gertrude of Wyoming.

MR. CHESWICK sat in the library of his big house in the Square, dressed more carefully than his wont, for Amy was coming home, and Miss Bab had said would bring company with her. The landscape in oils that had been brought from Cheswick was undergoing a regilding at the hands of the sunset, some gleams of which came filtering in through the flowers in Amy's window, as he called the bow. The old man leaned back in his cushioned chair and inhaled the fragrance of the heliotrope with a keen sense of delight therein, that seemed to have come to him in compensation, as it were, for his wasted powers of manhood. Miss Bab and Jacob Martin had never known such gentleness of eye and tone as were habitual to him now. His Bible was on the reading-desk attached to the arm of his chair. He found in its pages a solace and comfort for pain and trouble that he had not gathered from all the philosophies of the schools. It was a cup of cold sparkling water for lips that were well-nigh famished, an atonement offered for a life that came near to being hopeless, a rest prepared for limbs that were weary and crippled with pain, a rich fund of promise

for a soul that had recklessly scattered all its treasures of human love and sympathy. As he sat there, with the silvery hair growing very thin on the temples combed neatly back from his forehead, with his palsied hands lying peacefully in his lap, with that placid expression of patient waiting on his features, how little he looked a man who had nursed revenge to the exclusion of all higher impulses, and sacrificed the strength of his manhood to his passions! He sat in the quiet room and reviewed his past. Always when the fire in the grate burned low and the flowers sent out subtle wafts of fragrance, and the sound of his own breathing was all that stirred the stillness of the room, he was wont to resort to his unquiet and ill-spent past. Was it the power of contrast that carried his thoughts backward?

He thought of the first love of his youth, that butterfly-girl, who had been deluded with vain stories of pomp and display into flinging his life purposes away with her thoughtless hands. How he had hated her then, and hated all womanhood in her name! Now in this calm evening light of his life, that gave to all things its true colors, he could conceive how the heart of the girl might have been only thoughtless, not cruel, for she was very young; and here an old rhyme flitted through his brain, causing a smile to quiver over the placidity of his features: "*Maidens, like moths, are ever caught by glare.*" Then there came before his mental vision the picture of his wife, the woman he had taken to promote the state of Cheswick. Illy she bore it, poor, meek soul, gaining as reward for her long-suffering patience the slow pain of a broken heart. Next in this shadow-pageant came Cedric, the bright-eyed boy she bore him, of whom he had been so proud, even while, unconsciously, he had steeled his heart against him. And, lastly, Rabys Holme, in the

shape of his revenge. Ah, it was but just that he should live to reap the fruits of his wrongdoing!

When Miss Bab came in she found him reading his Bible. She too had an air of expectancy about her, and wore the cap and dress generally used for state occasions. But she had not her brother's placid ease of countenance and posture.

Jacob Martin came in shortly after and stationed himself behind his master's chair. There was a very intelligent glance exchanged between him and Miss Bab. She got up presently, and went out quietly by the door leading into the hall, but a casual observer might have detected the sudden pallor on her face, and she dropped in the first chair in her way, like one whose limbs had failed her. From the open drawing-room door darted Amy, muffled in fur, her face glowing with complex expressions.

"Have you told him, auntie? does he know?"

The poor old lady lifted her withered hands to her face. "I could not," she sobbed; "I was afraid of a stroke. You must tell him yourself." But she had no breath for more, for her "boy" had his arms around her,—despite his brown hair and whiskers, "her own dear blessed boy!"

Amy flew across the hall and into the library. Her uncle was still bending over his Bible.

He looked up as the light step drew near. "Why, Amy, my child!"

But this was altogether a new Amy that had come back to him. There was no shadow on the sweet face, nothing but happiness shining through the tears in her brown eyes.

"Uncle, are you very well this evening? Can you bear great joy? Say, uncle, do you think you can bear to hear what has happened?"

He pushed his spectacles nearer his eyes, and looked at her wonderingly, his palsied hands shaking more than their wont. "What is it, child? Have you heard from *him?* Is he *alive?*" It was pitiful to see the eager look on that withered face.

"O uncle, *don't* let it make you ill! try to bear it, for I must tell you: he is *here!*"

"*Here!* Jacob Martin!" The muffled tones rose high; he sat upright in his chair, his sunken blue eyes gleaming. "Help me on my feet! Rick! Rick, my boy!" The voice so long slow and uncertain gained a wonderful strength and distinctness in that wild, appealing cry.

And he who answered its summons, what did he see? A withered, emaciated old man, held by the arms of Jacob Martin upon limbs that bent and quivered beneath him, instead of the strong, unyielding figure he remembered, leonine in its proportions as those marble shapes of the Grecian athletes that one sees in Old World galleries. "O father, forgive me!"

The tremulous old arms were around his neck, the white-locked head on his breast. "Forgive *me*, my boy! God knows you have need!"

In those strong arms he felt himself borne back to the bolstering cushions of his chair, and then between his feeble hands he held the face of his son, and looked into the wide blue eyes, so like his mother's, and kissed his lips gently, lovingly, as his mother might have done, while Amy over in her window among the flowers, that had never bloomed so royally before, wept from such heartfelt gratitude and joy as it falls to few to know in this life. And old Jacob Martin, behind his master's chair, could not see the features of the lad he had loved and mourned so honestly for the tears that ran down his weather-beaten cheeks.

Amanda, coming up for orders from Miss Bab relative to supper, stopped aghast in the library-door. Was that *the master* praying, talking to God as one talks to a familiar friend? and Miss Amy was over by the flowers kneeling, and Miss Bab was kneeling, even her Jacob was kneeling,—and who was that broad-shouldered man with his head on the arm of the squire's chair?

"For all that Thou hast done for us, O God, for the ways that seemed so dark, we thank Thee. And that Thou will bring us all to meet his mother in Heaven, we beg for Thy dear Son's sake. Amen!"

"Oh, it is Mr. Rick! Lord love his heart! It is Mr. Rick come back safe an' sound!" cried the faithful old Abigail, weeping like a child.

Well, Aunt Bab had no right to complain of inertia that evening. Such a supper as she helped Amanda to set in the dining-room, from whence Mrs. Giles had been banished long ago! And such creamy rich brown Mocha as she sent around the table from her post behind the urn! The years were all obliterated from Miss Bab's memory; he was still her boy, who loved peach marmalade and cream and Maryland biscuit and cottage cheese, and did not think any one lived who could slice tongue so fine and thin as she! And Rick tried to gratify the dear old soul by tasting all her dainties and giving her occasionally one of his old saucy smiles and teasing remarks, but how could he feel like eating or jesting, on this first night of his home-coming, to find his father so wan and faded, with that new light of meekness in his sunken blue eyes. It was what the blessing of ease is to the pain-racked, fever-haunted sufferer, or the harbor after the tempestuous sea to the sailor who had lost all hope of reaching land, this being home again, but as the sufferer bears constant reminder of his pain in the weary hand and voice, so

even this moment of supreme exaltation bore its complement of unrest in the keen fear that smote him lest the days in which he was to know the full measure of a father's devotion were already numbered.

After tea, between the twilight and the dark, Cedric told his story, sitting close to his father, with Aunt Bab and Amy on either side. There were many tears shed over it, and not a few fell on the bolstering cushions of the arm-chair.

"They are together now, you say,—Rabys Holme and his mother?" his father asked when he had finished, and they all sat silent in the flower-scented apartment, quite dark now, except from the flickering light of the fire.

"Yes, father, though I fear she finds scant comfort in him, and her last words to me were that it was a hard law, but doubtless a just one, that the iniquities of the fathers should be visited upon the children."

And Amy asked, "Was her husband a very bad man, uncle?"

The old man groaned, and Miss Bab was discreetly silent; so they never knew the fatal sin that had been visited upon the heads of the children who had lived together in the old Hall at Cheswick,—the sin of betrayal, that engendered the yet more culpable sin of revenge; for "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will repay."

"You have been in a pit, my lad," said his father, when he bade him good-night, doing so with lingering lips, the strong bearded face of his son was so new to him, and he almost feared to let it slip from his vision, lest he should wake and find it a dream; "in a pit indeed, and so have I, for that matter,—a far deeper one than yours! Thank God that the daylight has come to us both! late

to me,—a sunset ray, that barely gives me time to get home," with a feeble, wistful smile; "but for you it is scarcely noonday, and you may shape your life on the lesson you have learned."

CHAPTER XXXV.

FRUITION.

"O dream of joy! is this indeed
The light-house top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?"
Rime of the Ancient Mariner.

It was the eve of a lovely spring day. A balmy air was afloat, redolent of spring odors; a pink-and-gold sunset filtered its glories of light and shade over the country road and long sweep of meadow-lands. Two carriages bowled down the white turnpike towards the cliffs, the first driven carefully by a stalwart coachman, its occupants a white-haired old gentleman, looking sadly wearied, and a lady prim and erect, with little silvery side-curls protruding from her bonnet-border. The second was a pony-phaeton drawn by dappled grays. A gentleman held the reins loosely over the ponies' necks, and looked about him with exclamations of delight. The light on his face was not borrowed from the radiant tints of the sunset. A lady sat by his side, very sweet and fair, though her beauty was so veiled by the mist of tears that it is well we have not to judge of it now for the first time. The cliffs rose high and green in front of them; the wheels grated upon the sandy road; the waters of the creek shone green in the distance, and the white dust from the burrs floated out over the horses' heads as the carriages passed the old mill and turned into the rugged

road, between the rows of jagged pines that fringed the cliffs, and the white oaks bending low down to the water's edge on the other side. A single turn of the horses' heads, and from the wilderness of dark-green banks and rushing waters they emerged upon a level plateau that bordered the terraced grounds of a noble building,—a brave old mansion standing at the top of the plateau, glimmering unsteadily now through the glamour of tears in the eyes of the carriage occupants, even in those keen black ones between the spruce gray curls.

"Welcome home, my wife! a thousand welcomes to Cheswick!" and as he spoke the gentleman lifted the lovely lady out upon the broad steps of the stone portico, then went over to where the old man leaned tired and pale among the carriage cushions.

"Well, father," and the strong manly tones were very tender, "is not this worth coming a long way to see? Dear old Cheswick, there never was such another superb old place! Now, put your arm around my neck; there! Steady, Jacob! Never fear, father, I will carry you safely. Run ahead, Amy, and see that the easy-chair is all right in the library. Now, Aunt Bab, one of Amanda's famous suppers, and we will soon have father rested."

To the great crimson library his boy carried him, where so long ago he had leaped from the window to the flower-bed outside, declaring that a man need not starve in the world because God had given him an unjust father. How homelike it looked and how comfortable! Ah, God was very good to give him back his son, and to bring him back once more to the old home of his forefathers.

After tea Amanda stole down to the little cottage in the grounds where lodged the gardener and his wife. "It was the sweetest weddin' you ever heern tell of!" she cried, out of breath with the rapid walk through the grounds.

"Not a great fuss, you know, 'cause Miss Amy ain't one o' that sort, but very harnsome for all. They was married in the liberry, and Miss Amy wore white satin and a veil. I guess she'll show it to you, ef you'd like to see it,—the dress and veil, I mean; an' there was flowers everywhere. They had a very fine brekfust. I ought to know, for I was in the wurks. Then they went on a toor, but they didn't stay long; t'Squire hates Mr. Rick out o' his sight. They went up to Wisconsin or Michigan, along o' some coppermines up there Mr. Rick knows about. And now we've come to Cheswick for the summer, tho' we don't calkerlate to stay no longer unless t'Squire keeps feeble. Mr. Rick's goin' to New York, 'cause he says he's got work to do in this world, and he seen somethin' to be done there more'n here."

* * * * * * * * *

They stood arm in arm by the low window of the old long parlor, looking out upon the grounds of Cheswick, never so fair as to-night under the full irradiating light of a silver moon,—shadow and shine, from the solid phalanx of the noble forest-trees to the graceful tremulous line of the honeysuckles on the lattices, shooting past the Cheswick chimneys. Every leaf and tiny twig seemed alive, pulsating in the evening air and dew. They stood together looking out upon the old familiar scene, and the old time seemed to come back and exist anew for them. Out there under the mulberry the shadows lay just as they had lain when they two had read the fables of the poets in the green stillnesses of their Academia. And she stood by him now, as then, the soft-eyed, sweet-voiced creature, whose nature was all akin with his own, for whose sweet sympathy and love he had refused a career in the world, a single distraction of mind or matter that would rob him of her presence for a day.

Ah, with that thought the present stood revealed as something quite different from the past. Not long had his life owned such completeness; not long had his arms held her against his heart so closely. For that reckless pursuance of his own pleasure, that presumptuous belief in his own power to shape his future he had paid a heavy penalty. But he had learned how little the heart can live upon, and how unyielding is life even when most hopeless.

The soft eyes looking out upon the moonlit grounds turned to him questioningly. In the unconscious pressure of the arm about her waist she read a sign of keener emotion than the beauty of his inheritance has aroused within him.

"I was thinking, my darling, that never again should I be able to deceive myself regarding the germ of endurance that is planted in humanity. I was thinking that it is worse than folly to ascribe to fate, destiny, God, if you will, the thwarted endeavors of our own lives, for to the man who wills all things are possible within the compass of reason and common sense."

"And to the man who *believes*, all things, even what human nature calls impossibilities, are within the compass of human endeavor!"

"To the man who believes?"

"In the efficacy of God's hidden and revealed agency to work us weal or woe as we deserve either. You of all men have reason to understand that."

He touched his lips to her brow almost reverently, for to him her simple faith was a wonderful thing, bearing the impress of its divine origin.

Then they drifted from the present into talk of the future as they stood there. He unfolded his plans for her approval. If his father lived and was willing they would

go back to New York in the autumn, and he would continue the work he had started there,—the work of carrying the divine art of music home to the hearts of the masses; missionaries in that broad field where, as the great deaf master had said, one is "nearer to God than in any other art."

Amy turned from the window at last and drew him gently over to where the organ had stood so long silent, and as she stood with her hand on his shoulder drinking in with keen delight the eager, grateful strains, and as he felt the sins and sorrows of the past drop from him as a garment, and gratitude spring up anew in his heart

> "To the dear God who loveth us,
> Who made and loveth all,"

they did not know either of them how in the chamber above the tired, white-haired old man, awakened from a restless slumber by those harmonious strains, reached out his feeble hands with a quivering heavy sigh, as a child to its mother, and relinquished with a smile the life that had been so mistaken, so barren of fair fruit, but which, because it had known repentance, was not to fail of fruition hereafter. Just so merciful is our tender Father to His erring, wayward children!

THE END.

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